A STUDY OF JOHN WESLEY FROM THE POINT OF VIEW OF THE EDUCATIONAL METHODOLOGY USED BY HIM IN FOSTERING THE WESLEYAN REVIVAL IN ENGLAND

by

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INTRODUCTION

John Wesley, as a priest of the Church of England, started a movement known as the Wesleyan Movement which had a transforming effect on the national, social, and religious life of England during the eighteenth century. Moreover, this movement resulted in the development of a world wide Methodism, the membership of which is now numbered in the millions. A movement of this size and influence is worthy of a study to determine the source of its power.

Various studies have been made of John Wesley and of the Wesleyan Movement in an effort to understand their effectiveness. John Wesley has been studied from the standpoint of a missionary, revivalist, organizer, poet, publisher, theologian, writer, educator, and general practitioner of medicine, but so far as it is presently known, no one has studied the rich source materials on the life of John Wesley to discover his educational methodology upon which the movement was fostered.

In the course of this study the term "educational" is used in its broader sense as over against the more formal or "class room" type of education. The concern here is with that process which has to do with the recognition of the needs of the masses of England and the attempts John Wesley made to help those people meet their needs in a meaningful way.

The term "methodology" is used here in connection with the methods, instruments or devices made use of in bringing those who

had need into such a relationship with resource persons and materials that helpful changes could be brought about in their lives.

In the course of this study John Wesley's use of preaching, hymns, the printed word, the organization of his people into small groups for instruction and fellowship, and the selection and training of assistants were examined as some of the methods used by him in propagating the faith which he declared and which he felt would bring about transformed lives in a transformed society.

A study was made of the historical resource materials dealing with the period in order to place the research in its historical setting. This material was supplemented by data from primary sources, in so far as they furnished an indication of Wesley's appraisal of the conditions existing at the time.

A study was made of the major biographies and interpretations of John Wesley with a view to (a) discovering what information they furnished as to the methods he used even though they were not written for this specific purpose, and (b) making a preliminary analysis of some educational categories to be used in the investigation of the primary sources.

Finally, a study was made of the primary sources available with a view to determining from them the methodology used by John Wesley in fostering the Wesleyan Revival in England.

The primary sources from which this study was made are:-
(a) The Journal of John Wesley, which in the course of this study

will be referred to as Journal, edited by Nehemiah Curnock, standard edition, 1938, 8 volumes; The Letters of the Rev. John Wesley, referred to here as Letters, edited by John Telford, 1931, 8 volumes; and The Works of the Rev. John Wesley, referred to here as Works, edited by John Mason, third edition, 1829, 14 volumes. These contain the day by day account of John Wesley's activities from October 1735 to January 1790, one hundred and forty-one sermons, letters, tracts, thoughts, appeals, grammars, dictionaries, poems, hymns, and medicinal writings. (b) Various booklets, tracts, articles and other writings which are now available in the libraries of the Methodist Historical Society of New York, Union Theological Seminary and Columbia University, all of New York.

CHAPTER I

WESLEY AND THE BIBLE

1. A Man of One Book

The Bible was John Wesley's first book in more ways than one. It was the book to which he turned on the day after he was five years of age and began to spell out the words of the first verse of Genesis in keeping with the educational tradition of the Wesley household. The Bible was the Book expounded by his father in the church and taught by his mother in his father's absence. It was the Bible through which he was introduced to the great literature of the ages, for it was there in the Proverbs, the Psalms, the Prophets, the Law, the Gospels, and the Epistles that he was exposed to the great treasures of spiritual and educational wisdom.

By the time that he had reached Oxford and had become a member of the Holy Club, it had become such a part of his nature that the first work of the Holy Club was the study of the Bible. Here with the other members he began his search of the Scriptures that was to be carried on for the rest of his life and which earned for all of them the names "Bible Moths" and "Bible Bigots". They were determined, however, to make the Scriptures the guide for their every act and thought in life.

Wesley's lifelong devotion and love for the Bible can be seen very clearly in the following words:

> I want to know one thing, the way to heaven; how to land safe on that happy shore. God himself has condescended to teach the way for this very end he came from heaven. He hath written it down in a book. O give me that book! At any price, give me the book of God! I have it: Here is knowledge enough for me. Let me be homo unius libri. Here then I am, far from the busy ways of men. I sit down alone: Only God is here. In his presence I open, I read this book; for this end, to find the way to heaven. Is there a doubt concerning the meaning of what I read? Does anything appear dark or intricate? I lift up my heart to the Father of Lights:- 'Lord is it not thy word, 'If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God?' Thou 'givest liberally and upbraidest not.' Thou hast said, 'If any be willing to do thy will, he shall know.' I am willing to do, let me know thy will. I then search after and consider parallel passages of Scripture, 'comparing spiritual things with spiritual.' I meditate thereon with all the attention and earnestness of which my mind is capable. If any doubt still remains, I consult those who are experienced in the things of God; and then, the writings whereby, being dead, they yet speak. And what I thus learn, that I teach.[1]

Eayrs reminds us that Wesley did not worship the Bible as a book, nor was it a fetish with him or something to be regarded with superstition. Rather, it was to him a great library of spiritual truth to be loved and studied to the end of understanding its teachings and obeying its commands. It was to him the Book of Books.[2]

2. The Bible as Authority

To Wesley God was the ultimate authority and He had seen fit to reveal himself through the Bible which was His word and

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1. Works, 5:iiiff.
2. Cf. Eayrs, George, John Wesley: Christian Philosopher and Church Founder, p.74.

and which contained a message of God to men. It had been given to man by the inspiration of God and was therefore infallibly true. Being infallible he found it profitable for the teaching of doctrine and Christlike character to the end that man might be perfect in the sight of God. [3] It was a great "unbroken, connected chain" from beginning to end [4] containing the great record of God's revelation of Himself to the world.

The Bible was to Wesley the source through which truth was revealed and after searching it for half a century, he wrote in 1768 that he was willing to stake his salvation on what he could learn from the Bible. [5] He felt that it contained all the truth that was necessary for salvation but that all it contained was not of equal value in this regard. Some of its revelations he felt were "immediately conducive to the grand end of all, the eternal salvation of men," and these were those which were stated not once, but repeated over and over in the Bible. [6] This does not mean, however, that the other revelations were less infallible, for it was as easy for him to think of God "falling from heaven as it was for His word to fail in any way." [7]

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3. Cf. Works, 5:193.
4. Works, 6:314.
5. Cf. Ibid., 6:142.
6. Cf. Ibid., 6:381.
7. Works, 10:364.

Wesley believed that God had condescended to come from heaven to show men the way to heaven. The directions He gave were found in the Bible and therefore the knowledge that it contained was of greater worth than all other knowledge. It was to be had at any price and one who had it had "knowledge enough."[8]

All his life Wesley endeavored to be all things to all men, but in doing so he refused to vary one bit from the Bible. He searched it constantly for assistance in this regard. When he could not find scripture to substantiate a belief or action, he then searched the Bible for scripture against it. If he found none, this to him was the equivalent of approval.[9] To him the Bible was the Christian's rule of right and wrong.[10] Here was the basis upon which every thought and action was to be judged here and now, as well as in eternity.[11] Here was the basis upon which his whole movement unfolded. By it every judgment, temper, word and action was measured in his efforts to be a Bible christian and to lead others to be the same. Because it was, he could say:

> Here I am: I and my Bible. I will not, I dare not, vary from this book, either in great things or small. I have no power to dispense with one jot or tittle of what is contained therein. I am determined to be a Bible Christian, not almost, but altogether.[12]

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8. Cf. Works, 5:iii.
9. Cf. Letters, 2:298.
10. Cf. Works, 5:136.
11. Cf. Letters, 3:172.
12. Works, 7:287.

The Bible was such a part of his life that it permeated his whole being. Not only did he use it as a guide to carry on his work, but it was a constant companion to him and he never ventured far from it. He read it according to the calendar, he studied it constantly, he quoted it in his writings and conversations. He translated it and used it as the basis of his preaching and speaking. His reason was based on it and his experience was tested by it. It contained all that he needed to know about salvation, but it was the source of answers for problems from everyday living as well.

It was in this latter connection that for a time at least he made use of the practice of opening the Bible at random and using the verse on which his eye happened to fall as the answer to the problem which he was facing. Such was the case on that memorable day in May, 1738, on which he was to feel his heart strangely warmed. It should be noted here, however, that if the passage he found on opening the Bible did not suit he would continue until he did find a suitable answer, or ask someone else to make the selection for him.[13] He often found selections of scripture from which he could preach in this way of opening the Bible and then preaching on the words upon which his eye fell.

Wesley preached that it was the command of God to believers and non-believers alike to search (read and hear) the scriptures. He felt that this was a means whereby the grace

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13. Cf. Journal, 2:157.

of God was conveyed to man to the end that the man of God might be perfect.[14] He insisted that all of his preachers have a first hand knowledge of the Bible, that they know the literal meaning of all of it and be able to deduce "proper corollaries, speculative, and practical from each text, to solve the difficult portions and answer any objections raised to the scriptures."[15] And in his Notes on the Old Testament he revealed that the way to understand the great truths of God was to meditate on them constantly. In this way one would not only come to have a knowledge of God and of Jesus Christ, but would be led to love Him with all he is and has, and be filled with all inward holiness described in the Bible.[16]

To assist his followers in studying and understanding the Bible he suggested the following: 1) to set apart both morning and evening for Bible study; 2) to read one chapter out of the Old Testament and one from the New Testament, but if there was not sufficient time only one or part of each was to be read; 3) to read to know the will of God and to do it when it is found; 4) to have a constant eye to the analogy of faith, the connection there is between those grand, fundamental doctrines, original sin, justification by faith, the new birth, inward and outward holiness; 5) study should be done in the spirit of prayer and closed with prayer for the scriptures can only be understood

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14. Cf. Ibid., 2:360.
15. Works, 10:482ff.
16. Cf. Works, 14:267.

through the same spirit in which they were given; 6) to pause while reading to examine oneself both in heart and life by what was read.[17]

Wesley himself never grew tired of studying the Bible and even a lifetime of study did not mar his enthusiasm for searching the Scriptures. He was indeed "homo unius libri."

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17. Cf. Ibid., 14:267ff.

CHAPTER II

THE NATURE OF MAN

1. Man in the Image of God

a. The Original State

Wesley followed the story of the creation of man and the universe as contained in the Bible very closely. He pictured man as the highest of God's creation in that he bore the very image of God and of His eternity. Man was created holy, merciful and perfect, dwelling in God through love. He was pure, sinless and undefiled. He knew no evil and was upright and happy in every respect. He knew God and loved God, which is, in substance, life everlasting.

Man was created in the natural image of God. He was spirit as God was spirit. He was endued with understanding and discerned truth by intuition. This understanding was perfect in its kind, and was without blemish. Thus he was able to name the animals God created as soon as he saw them, according to their inmost nature. Since he was a creature, however, his knowledge was limited in that he was capable of being mistaken and being deceived, though he was not "necessitated" to it.[1]

At the time of his creation man was given an unbiased will[2] with various affections. He was capable of loving, desiring and

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1. Cf. Works, 6:269ff.
2. Cf. Ibid., 6:243ff.

delighting in that which was good, thus making full use of his understanding. He was endued with a power of choosing what was good and rejecting what was evil also. Without this liberty of choice, Wesley felt, there could have been no moral good or evil. Man could not have been the free agent that he was.[3]

Man was created in the moral image of God, also. God created him not only in "knowledge," but in "righteousness and true holiness." As his understanding had been perfect and without blemish so were his affections. They were all "set right, and duly exercised on all their proper objects." As a free agent he chose whatever was good "according to the direction of his understanding." [4]

Man had an uninterrupted fellowship with the Father and with the Son. He was unspeakably happy. He was full of love, which was the sole principle of all his tempers, thoughts, words and actions. He was full of justice, mercy and truth. He was without sin of any kind. The eternal spirit and his own conscience bore testimony to him that his ways were good and acceptable to God.[5]

Man in this blissful state loved God and uniformly obeyed God. He delighted in the order, beauty and harmony of all of

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3. Cf. Ibid., 6:270.
4. Ibid., 6:270ff.
5. Cf. Ibid., 6:273.

the creatures of God, both animate and inanimate. No evil or sorrow or pain of body or mind interrupted this happiness. "For while he was innocent he was impassive; incapable of suffering. Nothing could stain this purity of joy. And to crown all, he was immortal."[6]

b. The Fall

Man was to remain in this holy state as long as he obeyed God in all things. This demand of obedience was all that was required of man. It was simple and direct; "thou shalt not eat of the fruit," but in Adam, man disobeyed God and the moment he did he was condemned by the righteous judgment of God. His soul was separated from God, apart from whom it has no life at all. His body became corruptible and mortal and subject to the power of death. With the death of his spirit and thus being dead to God, he hastened on to death everlasting, a destruction of the body and the soul in never-ending fire.[7]

To Wesley, Adam was not only the father, but the representative of all mankind. All men to be born into the world were contained in him. And since sin and death came into the world through this man who was the common father and representative of all, all men thus came short of the favor of God, became "children of wrath" and subject to judgment and condemnation at the hands of God. In Adam all died. He entitled all his

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6. Ibid., 6:243.

7. Cf. Works 5:54ff.

posterity to error, guilt, sorrow, pain, disease and death, for "through the offence of one,"

> All are dead, dead to God, dead in sin, dwelling in a corruptible, mortal body shortly to be dissolved, and under the sentence of death eternal.[8]

In his sermon On the Fall of Man, Wesley appealed to the experience of the people to bear out these facts. He admonished them:

> Open your eyes! **Look** around you! See darkness that may be felt; see ignorance and error; see vice in ten thousand forms; see consciousness of guilt, fear, sorrow, shame, remorse, covering the face of the earth! See misery, the daughter of sin. See, on every side, sickness and pain, inhabitants of every nation under heaven, driving on the poor, helpless, sons of men, in every age, to the gate of death.[9]

Through the fall the very nature of man was changed in that he lost God's natural and moral image, which was replaced by the image of the devil. Man died to God and broke the law which God had given for his instruction. He retained his liberty, the power of directing his own affections and actions in choosing good and evil, but he was free only to sin. He had no power to do good. His nature was now totally depraved. He had lost the image of God, righteousness and holiness, but most of all he had lost the knowledge and love of God. He was cut off from the source of spiritual life. He was now totally ignorant of the "spiritual or invisible world. He was by nature incapable of knowing God." He was afraid, subject to weakness, sickness and pain. He was headed for eternal death.

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8. Ibid., 5:55.

9. Works, 6:223.

c. Man Under the Law

In this state man neither feared nor loved God. Having no light or knowledge of the things of God, he walked in utter darkness.[10] The soul was asleep. The spiritual senses were not awake. They were incapable of discerning either good or evil. The eyes of the understanding were closed. Clouds and darkness covered them. The avenues of the soul were shut; therefore there were no avenues for the knowledge of spiritual things. Man was ignorant of God; his laws, his holiness, without which none shall see God. He was at rest. He felt secure because he could not see the darkness and danger everywhere about him. He felt that either there was no God or that He was not concerned with earthly affairs. He was satisfield to be "outwardly blameless" without concern of extending it to his "temper, desire, thought, motion of the heart."[11]

Man was ignorant of himself as well as of God. He imagined that he could repent at his leisure. He convinced himself that he was free, that he could do as he pleased. He had the form, but not the power of Godliness. He had a "kind of joy" in thinking of his "wisdom and goodness" while continuing to live in sin. He sinned willingly. He neither conquered sin or even fought against it.[12] His heart was "necessarily and essentially evil" and his works, while profitable to man, were not acceptable to God, because they did not spring from faith in Christ - therefore they were not of God.[13]

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10. Cf. Works, 5:108ff.
11. Ibid., 5:99ff.
12. Cf. Ibid., 5:99ff.
13. Cf. Ibid., 5:59.

Man without God was a sick man. He was born into the world with certain spiritual diseases of his nature. These were atheism, pride, love of the world, anger, and deviation from truth. He was prone to lying. Pretension, injustice, selfishness, and unkindness, plagued him.[14]

He was not only suffering from the effects of his fallen nature which placed him in the realm of the beasts of the field, but sin had placed him "under the tutorage of the evil one who mightily furthers him in his evil ways and inclinations."[15]

With God, man enjoyed the presence of the Holy Spirit which was the Spirit of God in his life. It was through the Spirit that God communicated himself to man and through which man bore likeness to God. It was His life in man, but when man disobeyed God, took matters in his own hands and would not be guided by the Spirit, the Spirit of God left him. The seed of a superior life was recalled from him. He was no longer fit to be formed into a heavenly condition because of his longing for and dependence upon earthly things which he knew were not pleasing to God. He thus found himself forsaken of God, left to the poverty, weakness, and misery of his own proper nature. He was now a mere animal, like other flesh and blood creatures, different only in the possession of a larger understanding by which he would either be led into greater absurdities than they could be guilty of, or else be made sensible of

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14. Cf., Works, 7:89ff.

15. Ibid., 7:511.

his lost happiness and put on the right course of regaining it.

Without God's Spirit in him, however, he was in a state of death - a death from God and void of all intercourse and happiness with Him. He no longer had the glory of God in him nor could he act with His powers. He was still a being, but of a servial and not a filial nature.[16] His heart was not only "desperately wicked but deceitful above all things."[17] His soul "lies in darkness and the shadow of death; under the dominion of the prince of darkness, without hope, and without God in the world..."[18] He was by nature a mere atheist, a child of wrath.[19] His tempers were corrupt and abominable. All his words and works could never be any better by himself alone. As a natural man he had no more faith than a devil, if that much.[20]

2. Man Under Grace

a. Help is of God

Where man in his depraved state had no knowledge of God, no love of God, no fear of God and thus was a diseased man, God, through the religion of Jesus Christ applied "medicines" to heal this sickness and to restore human nature which was totally corrupted. God heals man's atheism by the knowledge of

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16. Cf., Ibid., 7:511.
17. Ibid., 7:339.
18. Ibid., 6:477.
19. Cf. Works, 7:89.
20. Cf. Journal, 3:65.

Himself and of Jesus Christ. The knowledge and acceptance of the sacrifice and love of Christ for him produces repentance and meekness which can heal the disease of pride; resignation to His will heals self will; the love of God heals the love of the world through faith working by love. Man thus becomes dead to the world and alive to God in a "loving, thankful acquiesence in, and conformity to, the whole will and word of God." [21] To trace Wesley's conception of the work of God in bringing this about is the purpose of this section of the study.

Wesley felt that the wisdom of God was far too deep for man to understand except as God had condescended to reveal Himself to man.[22] There was no more innate idea of God and the ways of God in man than in the beasts of the field, but since God has revealed himself to man in a number of ways it is possible to know something of the way He works: (1) God has seen fit to reveal Himself through nature. The beauty, orderliness, majesty, and mystery of the universe and all else that men see and experience about them kindle their imaginations and turn their thoughts towards God, [23] (2) God appeals to the individual directly, through "preventing grace"; the "drawings of the Father." If man yields to them, they increase more and more bringing light, showing man the way to walk with God in justice, mercy and humility. (3) God reveals Himself through

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21. Works, 6:64.

22. Cf. Ibid., 6:327.

23. Cf. Ibid., 6:325ff.

the moral law which was originally given to angels, but which He will write in the hearts of all believers afresh. (4) The Scriptures reveal to man an account of God and His government of human affairs. This, Wesley felt, was best understood in the light of the Christian tradition. (5) And the Father revealed the Son, and the Son revealed the Father, as the redeemer of man.

In these revelations Wesley felt man was able to see God as He is, the Creator and Sustainer of all that He had made. One who knows all and is in all. His mercy extends to all men and is never withdrawn nor forced upon any man. He is infinite in wisdom and power; all things are possible with Him, but He refuses to deny Himself by removing evil from the world by decree. Rather than take away the virtue, will, understanding and liberty of man, God has made it possible for him to work out his own salvation by the help that God has given him.

Wesley insisted that the "eternal, omnipresent, almighty, all-wise Spirit," not only created all things, but superintends and governs all that He has created within the bounds of creation, through the utmost extent of space as well, and from "everlasting to everlasting." There is but one God who creates, orders and sustains all; therefore, there is no happiness except in Him.[24]

It is to Him that man, unholy and unhappy, must come and cry out for help and it is through Him that he finds redemption through the blood of Jesus, that the Son is revealed to him, that the love of God is shed abroad in his heart and he becomes a new creature ever pressing on until he attains the mind that was in Christ.[25]

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24. Cf. Works, 7:271.

25. Cf. Ibid., 7:271ff.

In an Extract of the Life and Death of Mr. Thomas Haliburton, Wesley summed up for us just what God does in bringing about the change that He does in man:

> The general manner wherein it pleases God to set it (the Kingdom of God) up in the heart is this: A sinner, being drawn by the love of the Father, enlightened by the Son, ('The true light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world') and convinced of sin by the Holy Ghost; through preventing grace which is given him freely, cometh weary and heavy laden, and casteth all his sins upon Him that is 'mighty to save'. He receiveth from Him true, living faith. Being justified by faith, he hath peace with God; He rejoices in hope of the glory of God, and knows that sin hath no more dominion over him. And the love of God is shed abroad in his heart, producing all holiness of heart and of conversation.[26]

b. The Centrality of Christ

Wesley recognized the centrality of Christ in this plan of salvation which he felt God had made possible for all mankind. It was through Christ that God had inwardly manifested Himself to man, thus enabling him to recognize Jesus both as Lord and God, who not only loved man, but gave Himself for man.[27] Where satan had tainted man with unbelief, Christ made it possible for man to believe in Him. He opens the eyes of the understanding of man; takes away the veil of darkness which covers him and man is again able to see by intuition that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself. Through Christ, pride, self-will,

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26. Works, 14:227ff.
27. Cf. Works, 6:274.

the love of the world and all desires of the flesh are destroyed and man is restored to favor, pardon, and peace with God. The way is opened for man, the sinner, "in whom dwelleth no good thing" to realize pardon and peace, love and holiness, unspeakable joy and happiness.[28]

Man in his fallen state needed help to restore him to the first estate. Keeping the law in his fallen state would not bring happiness. That man could find only in "being raised above himself unto God." [29] This was made possible for him in that God was present in Christ, that the image and likeness of God which was lost through Adam might be restored to man through Jesus Christ. As man through Adam inherited death, through Christ he would inherit eternal life.[30]

He was "another common Head of mankind, a second general Parent and Representative of the whole human race" who bore all the griefs, the iniquities, of all men. He was wounded for the transgressions of man and bruised for his iniquities. His soul was an offering for sin. He poured out his blood for sinful man. He 'bare our sins in his body on the tree' that by his suffering man might be healed. In doing so he tasted of death for every man thus reconciling the world to God. And as sin came by one man, so does righteousness come to all men by the gift of God. [31]

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28. Cf. Ibid., 6:275.
29. Works, 7:512.
30. Cf. Ibid, 7:513.
31. Cf. Works, 5:55.

The righteousness of Christ is imputed to man as soon as he believes. [32] They to whom the righteousness of Christ is imputed are made righteous by the Spirit of Christ, are renewed in the image of God 'after the likeness wherein they were created in righteousness and true holiness.' [33]

> Christ is not only God above us; which may keep us in awe, but cannot save; but he is Immanuel, God with us, and in us. As he is the Son of God, God must be where he is; and as he is the Son of man, he will be with mankind; the consequence of this is, that in the future age "The tabernacle of God will be with men," and he will show them his glory; and, at present, he will dwell in their hearts by faith in his Son. [34]

Wesley spent his life preaching and teaching that it was to a God like this to whom man could come with all of his sins and be justified. To be justified was to receive pardon, the Scripture taught him.

> The plain scriptural notion of justification is pardon, the forgiveness of sins. It is that act of God the Father, whereby, for the sake of the propitiation made by the blood of his son, he 'showeth forth his righteousness (or mercy) by the remission of the sins that are past.' [35]

or

> . . . justification is the clearing us from the accusation brought against us by the law. . . that whereas we have transgressed the law of God, and thereby deserved the damnation of hell, God does not inflict on those who are justified the punishment which they had deserved. [36]

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32. Cf. Ibid., 5:238.

33. Cf. Ibid., 5:241.

34. Works, 7:514.

35. Works, 5:57.

36. Ibid., 5:56.

It is a salvation from sin, both the power and the consequence of sin, by the atonement of Christ actually applied to the soul of the sinner now believing on him. He is born again. He is now a "babe in Christ," to receive and grow in the "sincere milk of the word." It is the beginning of a process for growth that if allowed to continue goes on from "faith to faith, grace to grace" until he attains the full stature of Christ.[37]

c. The New Birth

The new birth, like all other aspects of salvation of man, is of God. It is the Holy Spirit of God working in man, which makes the change. No man can explain how it is done, but no one can fail to recognize the fact when God has wrought a change in the human heart and life. He may act through the understanding by enlarging and enlightening it in showing man the mysteries of God or he may act through the will or affections of man giving good things to him, withdrawing him from evil and inspiring good thoughts. [38]

Justification, it was pointed out above, is what God does for man in pardoning his sins for Christ's sake, but the new birth is the change wrought in man by his spirit.

> It is that great change which God works in the soul when he brings it into life; when he raises it from the death of sin to the life of righteousness. It is the change wrought in the whole soul by the Almighty Spirit of God when it is 'created anew in Christ Jesus;' when it is renewed after the image of God, in righteousness and true holiness;' when the love of the world is

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37. Cf. Ibid., 5:11 ff.

38. Cf. Works 8:49.

> changed into the love of God; pride into humility; passion into meekness; hatred, envy, malice, into a sincere, tender disinterested love for all mankind. In a word, it is that change whereby the earthly, sensual, devilish, mind is turned into the 'mind which was in Christ Jesus.' This is the nature of the new birth. 'So is every one that is born of the spirit.' [39]

Though it may come at the time of baptism, Wesley insisted[40] that the new birth was more than just baptism, or any other outward change, because to him, it was a vast inward change, a change in the whole manner of existence of man. When one had received the new birth, he was as in another world. Wesley used the account of the birth of a child to make its meaning clear.

Before birth, the child is alive and has all of its natural features and equipment to enjoy the world about it, but because there is a 'veil' between it and the world, it is incapable of enjoying it or even communicating with it. The senses through which communication would be ordinarily carried on are as asleep. When the child is born, however, he is able by slow degrees to make use of his eyes, ears, and all of his natural faculties through which he can communicate with the world about him. When he does, life takes on new meaning for him.

So it is with the spiritual birth. Before a man is born of the spirit, he has all of the faculties for enjoying God and the things of God's world, but his senses are as asleep. He is alive (as the beasts of the field), but he is utterly unaware of God.

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39. Works, 6:71.

40. Cf. Journal, 2:135.

He does not feel his presence. He cannot see him, or hear him, or understand him. His spiritual senses are asleep. He has no knowledge of or intercourse with the world of the spirit. A thick veil separates him from it. He does not know how to penetrate it.

When he is born of God, his whole being becomes aware of God's presence. A kind of spiritual respiration is set in operation between him and God which not only sustains the spiritual life in him, but increases it. All the senses of the soul are now awake making possible a discernment between spiritual good and evil which was not possible before. [41]

The eyes of his understanding are now opened and he can see God as He is. His greatness, his mercy, his love, his promises, are all discernable to him. His ears are now opened and he hears the voice of God and obeys its call. His spiritual senses are now awake. The spiritual world becomes real to him and he becomes aware of the things of God. He now has peace and joy and the love of God is shed abroad in his heart. He now dwells in God and God in him.[42]

3. Man's Part in the Process of Change

a. The Place of Faith

The change that Wesley aimed at bringing about in the soul of man was strictly speaking, wholly the work of God, an act of Grace, but practically speaking, it consisted of three parts.

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41. Cf. Works, 5:224ff.

42. Cf. Ibid., 5:226.

Two of these were of God and the third of man which, of course, God made possible. God's part consisted in making use of "his great mercy and grace," and the satisfaction of his justice through the sacrifice of Christ. Man's part consisted in having a "true and living faith in the merits of Jesus Christ." [43]

Wesley felt that any attempt on the part of man to find a way to conquer sin within himself, and without God, was a waste of time and to be delving in "broken reeds, bubbles, smoke." Help was only to be found in God, for while man may see what sin is and what needs to be done to conquer it, he is powerless to achieve the victory. It was a work of faith. [44]

> Wesley defined faith such as this as follows:
>
> Faith in general is a divine, supernatural. .,. evidence, or conviction, 'of things not seen,' not discoverable by our bodily senses, as being either past, future, or spiritual. Justifying faith implies, not only a divine evidence or conviction that 'God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself;' but a sure trust and confidence that Christ died for my sins, that he loved me, and gave himself for me. [45]

This faith is the "root" of all religion and without it man could not please God. [46] Whether one comes to believe in early childhood or in mid-life or in advancing years, it is the only means under heaven whereby a sinner can be saved, [47] the only thing

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43. Works, 8:361.

44. Cf. Works, 6:268.

45. Works, 5:60ff.

46. Cf. Works, 7:60.

47. Cf. Works, 5:61.

that is immediately, indespensably, absolutely requisite for pardon. No matter what else the sinner possessed, without faith he could not be saved. With faith, yet without all else, he "cannot but be justified." In this sense it is the sole condition of justification.[48] No pardon is possible without it.[49]

In short, it embraced all that was necessary for salvation as contained in the "oracles of God" and provable by them. By it the Bible became a lantern to the feet of the believer as well as the sole rule of his faith and practice. By it man was given the ability to fear God and to work righteousness, to be accepted of God, and the wrath of God was no longer upon him.[50] This faith was the

> best guide of the blind, the surest light of them that are in darkness, the most perfect instructor of the foolish.:..overturning all prejudices of corrupt reason, all the false maxims revered among men, all evil customs and habits, all that 'wisdom of the world which is foolishness with God;' and 'casteth down imaginations,' reasonings, 'and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringeth into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.'[51]

Through faith "all things are possible to him." Through faith man could see that his real calling in life was to glorify God who had bought him with such a price. He now saw Christ

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48. Cf. Works, 5:62.

49. Cf. Works, 6:48.

50. Cf. Works, 7:189.

51. Works, 5:204ff.

in all his greatness. Through faith he was delivered from the "yoke of sin" and his conscience was purged from "dead works," he was strengthened so that he was delivered from the power of sin and now was able to yield himself entirely to God. It was by faith that the Spirit of God was to bear witness with his spirit that he was a child of God, that the things he now did were acceptable in the sight of God, and that he would be able to endure in the Christian warfare even to the end. It was the anchor which was to keep him steady in a troublesome world.[52]

Real Christian faith, he insisted, implied that a man first renounce himself by totally rejecting "confidences in the flesh" if he would be "found in Christ." He was to come having nothing to pay, with no trust in his own works or righteousness of any kind. He must come before God as a "lost, miserable, self-destroyed, self-condemned, undone, helpless sinner; as one whose mouth is utterly stopped, and who is altogether guilty before God.[53] This sense of sin together with such an unutterable convication that his help was in Christ and a sure desire for that salvation must precede a living faith.

Man had to put off the "filthy rags" of his own righteousness before he could put on the "spotless righteousness of Christ." He must repent before he could believe the gospel. He must be cut off from all dependence on things before he could depend on Christ. He must free himself from confidence in his own right before he could have confidence in that of Christ. Until he has been delivered from trusting in anything that he did, he could

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52. Cf. Ibid., 5:205ff.

53. Ibid. 5:213ff.

not thoroughly trust in what Christ had done and suffered. First he received the sentence of death in himself, then he could trust in Him that lived and died for him.[54]

No man was worthy of the praise of God "until his heart is circumcized by humility," until he could see himself as "little, and base and vile," unless he was convinced of the corruption of his nature and how far removed he was from original righteousness, unless he was aware that without the spirit and power of God he was utterly helpless, to do anything pleasing in the sight of God.[55]

Thus man's part was one of complete surrender to God. He must come to realize his "want of God" and to seek "that honor which cometh from God only" thus turning his back on "that which cometh of men" unless it was aimed at pleasing God. He must refuse to be led by his senses and appetites or passions or even by natural reason. He must now walk by faith and be controlled by faith in his every action and thought and desire.[56] This lowliness of mind, learned of Christ, was not only to cleanse man from pride and vanity, but was to make it possible for him to embrace with a willing mind the faith that could make him whole.[57] Man thus became able to do all

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54. Cf. Ibid., 5:241.

55. Cf. Ibid., 5:208.

56. Cf. Ibid., 5:209.

57. Cf. Ibid., 5:204.

things through Christ.

b. Co-Workers with God

Wesley insisted that just because of this work of Christ man was not to feel that there was nothing that he could do. He enumerated some of the things that man could do. He could love God and keep His commandments; honor Him by obeying Him; glorify Him by imitating Him; keep to Christ; trust in Christ; have confidence in Christ; cleave to Christ; exalt Christ as a prince to give repentance; and as a saviour to give remission of sins; to create a new heart; and to renew a right spirit within. [58]

Therefore because God worked, man could work to "fulfill all righteousness." He could love Christ, because Christ first loved him. He could walk in love because of the example of Christ, but without Christ he could do nothing. With Christ all things were possible to him. Man was to use the grace of God now in his heart and God would give him more.[59]

Thus it is evident here that Wesley, while holding to his belief in the inability of man to help himself, saw in man the possibility and the necessity of an infinite growth by the grace of God. Man, he felt, was charged with the responsibility of maintaining and fostering the growth of the grace that he had received through faith in Christ.

Wesley believed that no person would be finally saved who had not taken every opportunity to do every good work possible,

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58. Cf. Works, 10:369.

59. Cf. Works, 6:512.

but more than that, unless the "servant of God" moved forward in growth and spiritual development to become a "son of God"[60] he would lose the grace that he had previously received. And unless he then repented and claimed the merits of Christ all over again, he would perish eternally. Man would never know God as He is or find Him completely unless he waited for Him while doing good.[61] Not to do so was to stop the flow of grace at any time. He must go forward to perfect love or he would fall back to his original state.[62] Just as man could progress from grace to grace into the fullness of Christ, he could fall away suddenly or by degrees by yielding to temptation or to any known sin of omission or commission.[63]

Thus it was the duty of man to "effectually improve" the work of God in his heart. This grace that one received when he gave his heart to God would continue as far as God is concerned, but it was entirely up to man whether it did or not. Wesley felt that whoever improves the grace he has already received, whoever increased in the love of God, will surely retain it. God will not only continue to give, but will give it more abundantly! Whereas, whoever does not make proper use of this grace cannot possibly retain it.

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60. Works, 7:236.

61. Cf. Journal, 2:483ff.

62. Cf. Works, 7:199.

63. Cf. Works, 6:526.

Thus the blessings of God were not to be received in vain. Man was to "stir up" the gift of God within him as he went on to perfection. He was to do all that was in his power to help others find the way and to walk in it and to pray constantly for the salvation of all men.[64] He was to do all in his power to avoid the things of the flesh and to strive for perfection of his thoughts, words, and works in the sight of God.

Thus once God has brought about a change in the heart of man he must avail himself of every means possible to work with the Holy Spirit to maintain and nourish what God has done. Sin could undo the work of God and even a sin of omission while not undoing it immediately would do so gradually and slowly by quenching the spirit of God in the soul of man. The neglect of prayer or other means of grace, the failure to rebuke the sin residing in the heart of others, would, he felt, bring a "leanness" to the soul of the believer.[65]

Man was not saved, as the Calvinists believed, by an irresistible force, but as a free agent. God wanted man to be saved, but he was not willing to force man as if he were a tree or a stone. Man was a reasonable creature endued with understanding to discern what was good and liberty to either accept or refuse salvation at all times. God had set both life and death before man and left him to choose the good or evil as he saw fit.[66]

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64. Cf. Ibid., 6:312ff.

65. Ibid., 6:81ff.

66. Cf. Works, 10:232ff.

There was no end to man's spiritual quest. Even those who were "fathers in Christ" - who enjoyed an assurance of hope that they would eventually "reign with Christ" were exhorted to pray and to watch continually, to deny themselves, take up their crosses daily, "to fight the good fight against the world, the flesh and the devil" until they were able to understand fully the love of Christ and to be filled with the fullness of God.[67] Wesley knew they could not stand still. They must either go forward or fall back.[68]

Wesley felt that man was to be a co-worker with God in the process of salvation. The scriptures taught him that when man received power from God, from then on he was to be engaged in working out his own salvation together with God.[69] Unless he thus cooperated with God, his salvation would be left undone forever.

As it was pointed out previously, God takes the initiative in the change of man when he touches the heart of the one who thus sleeps under the "shadow of death," but man has an important part to play too. In his sermon on Means of Grace, Wesley gives us a very full account which bears quoting here:

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67. Cf. Works, 7:237.

68. Cf. Ibid., 7:202.

69. Cf. Works. 10:231.

> A stupid, senseless wretch is going on in his own way, not having God in all his thoughts, when God comes upon him unawares, perhaps by an awakening sermon or conversation, perhaps by some awful providence, or, it may be, by an immediate stroke of his own convincing Spirit, without any outward means at all. Having now a desire to flee from the wrath to come, he purposely goes to hear how it may be done. If he finds a preacher who speaks to the heart he is amazed, and begins searching the Scriptures, whether these things are so? The more he hears and reads, the more convinced he is; and the more he meditates thereon day and night. Perhaps he finds some other books which explains and enforces what he has heard and read in Scripture. And by all these means, the arrows of conviction sink deeper into his soul. He begins also to talk of the things of God, which are uppermost in his thoughts; yea to talk with God; to pray to him; although, through fear and shame, he scarcely knows what to say. But whether he can speak or no, he cannot but pray, were it only in 'groans which cannot be uttered!' Yet, being in doubt, whether 'the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity' will regard such a sinner as him, he wants to pray with those who know God, with the faithful, in the great congregation. But here he observes others go up to the table of the Lord. He considers 'Christ has said 'Do this'. How is it that I do it not? I am too great a sinner. I am not fit. I am not worthy.' After struggling with these scruples a while, he breaks through. And thus he continues in God's way, in hearing, reading, meditating, praying, and partaking of the Lord's Supper till God, in the manner that pleases him, speaks to his heart, 'Thy faith hath saved thee. Go in peace.'[70]

On another occasion he described the change that takes place as one where man is literally shaken out of his sleep into a state of wakeful consciousness of the danger he is in. It may

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70. Works, 5:198ff.

instantaneous, or it may come by degrees, but man is able to see himself as he is and worthy of the deepest hell. At the same time he is able to see God as just and loving and pure and holy and he begins to contemplate what a fearful thing it would be to fall into the hands of the living God.

Wesley insisted that in the process:

(1) The meaning of the law breaks in on his consciousness--not only the law of the ten commandments, but the laws of Christ. He becomes aware that they are concerned with both outward and inward holiness and obedience. The word of God begins to take on new meaning for him. He begins to be aware that he has neglected the salvation offered to him through Christ. He has trodden it under foot.

(2) He sees himself as he is. His righteous pretensions to religion and virtue and his excuses by which he covered himself are stripped from him. He sees himself now as completely evil and deserving of death and hell. He hates the things of the world he once loved. He seeks rest, but finds none. Anguish tears at his soul. His past life becomes intolerable to him. Sorrow, remorse and fear take hold on him. He is on the verge of distraction. His memory, understanding, and all natural faculties are suspended.[71]

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71. Cf. Ibid., 5:101ff.

(3) Sin overpowers him. He tries to free himself but cannot escape. He is as one in prison. He tries to turn from sin, but he sins on. He sees sin and abhors it but he is powerless to quit it. He sees sin driving him farther and farther from God. He rebels, but he cannot free himself. The more he tries the more he is bound. He toils on unsuccessfully, until at length "the poor, sinful, helpless wretch is even at his wit's end and can barely groan, 'O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" [72]

(4) Man continues in this state of fear and bondage where he cries out to God until God Himself delivers him, and when this happens he is no longer under the law but under grace. He is in favor with God. The Holy Ghost now reigns in his heart. His eyes are opened and he sees God as "a loving gracious God" in all his glory. "Heavenly, healing light now breaks in upon his soul." He is able to discern the deep things of God; he sees Christ as the Son of God reconciling the world to God. Christ takes away his sins, thus reconciling him to God "by the blood of the Covenant."[73]

(5) The guilt and power of sin are now removed. He is "crucified with Christ." Remorse, sorrow of heart and the anguish of a wounded spirit are ended. God turns his heaviness into joy. He who made sore now heals. He is made free from

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72. Ibid., 5:104ff.

73. Cf. Ibid., 5:106ff.

the fear of the wrath of God and power of the devil, hell and death. He is now a citizen of another world. He has liberty from guilt, fear and sin. He strives and prevails against sin. He is now dead to sin and alibe to God. God, not sin, reigns over him. He is now the servant of righteousness and not of sin. He has peace with God. He is a living witness of the glorious liberty of the sons of God. He is delivered from evil works and from all unholiness of conversation, doing no evil to any man and being zealous of all good works.[74]

Wesley realized that it was no small thing for man to admit the "Divine Guest" into his heart. He was aware that when one does, the laws of "another world" become operative and must be observed. Man must be willing to suffer martyrdom in his body and to sacrifice his goods. One must love one's neighbor as if he were entirely sinless and truly a child of God. The fruits of the spirit must be looked on as "holy dispositions, suitable to the instincts of a superior life already begun" and not as mere "moral virtues, calculated for the comfort and decency of the present life." Man thus turns his back upon the world and finds comfort in God, and while it is not easy, he who has hope "does it gladly and eagerly" with singleness of heart.[75]

> And when we say 'Believe and thou shalt be saved,' we do not mean 'Believe and thou shalt step from sin to heaven, without any holiness coming between; faith supplying the place of holiness;' but 'Believe, and thou shalt be holy; believe in the Lord Jesus and thou shalt have peace and power together; thou shalt have power from Him in whom thou believest, to trample

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74. Cf. Ibid., 5:106ff.

75. Works, 7:515 ff.

the fear of the wrath of God and power of the devil, hell and death. He is now a citizen of another world. He has liberty from guilt, fear and sin. He strives and prevails against sin. He is now dead to sin and alibe to God. God, not sin, reigns over him. He is now the servant of righteousness and not of sin. He has peace with God. He is a living witness of the glorious liberty of the sons of God. He is delivered from evil works and from all unholiness of conversation, doing no evil to any man and being zealous of all good works.[74]

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> And when we say 'Believe and thou shalt be saved,' we do not mean 'Believe and thou shalt step from sin to heaven, without any holiness between; faith supplying the place of [illegible]ve, and thou shalt be holy; [illegible] thou shalt have peace and power from Him in

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74. Ibid., 5:106

75. Works, 7:615 ff.

> sin under thy feet; power to love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and to serve Him with all thy strength: Thou shalt have power, 'by patient continuance in well doing, to seek for glory, and honour, and immortality; 'Thou shalt both do and teach all the commandments of God, from the least even to the greatest: Thou shalt teach them by thy life as well as thy words, and so 'be called great in the Kingdom of heaven.'[76]

4. The Significance of Wesley's Theory

From this vantage point it is somewhat surprising to find the strictness with which Wesley adhered to the bibical interpretation of the creation, fall and redemption of man. His background and natural ability, his education and extensive travel should have put him in the position from which he could have seen the needs of man in a much larger way. He knew the people of the Church of England having been reared in one of its homes, worshipped at its altars, educated at its schools, taught its children and preached its gospel. He knew the Moravians, the Quakers, the Calvinists and the Catholics. He knew life at court and the lot of the common man. He had observed man close to nature and uncorrupted by civilization in the American Indian. He was one of the best read men of the day, but instead of making use of this knowledge to make a broader interpretation of man, Wesley insisted on a bibical interpretation which he substantiated and confirmed by the depraved conditions of man as he saw him in the day in which he lived.

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76. Works, 5:318.

It is evident, however, that Wesley's conception of the depravity of man was in keeping with the picture of man portrayed by many of the historians of the period. Both Wesley, and the historians, found man to be derelict morally, socially and spiritually and greatly in need of help to bring about any kind of transformation in his nature or his culture. However, the modern educator, while recognizing the need for a complete reformation of man, would not be willing to accept Wesley's views that man's condition was due to original sin, for, while making due allowances for the place heredity plays in one's character and make up, the modern educator would endeavor to interpret man's depraved condition in terms of the total culture in which he lived.

Wesley's theory gives no indication that he was aware that there was any connection between what was going on in one's culture and what one was morally, socially or spiritually. Man to him was evil because he was born in sin, because he was lost, sick, blind and helpless. He was spiritually dead and no better than the beasts of the fields.

Over against this view the modern educator would take into account the total culture and interpret man's condition in terms of the interaction that goes on between man and the culture in which he lives. Thus, the moral, social and spiritual aspects of man would be seen in their relation to the whole of life, and not segments which could be separated and viewed apart from the total life of man.

The modern educator would also question Wesley's theory as to how the transformation in man is brought about. Wesley insisted that because of man's depraved state there was nothing that he could do about bettering his condition. He was completely helpless and anything that was done for him must come from outside man. Man must be born again and this new birth was the work of God. The record, however, bears out the fact of the great and continued effort that he put forth to help man work out his own salvation, and is evidence that Wesley was aware of, and did make use of an educational process in which growth and development of the individual did take place. Thus, while Wesley insisted that the complete transformation of the individual was due entirely to the work of God in man, the modern educator is aware of the powerful effects that such a program of Christian nurture as he put into operation would have in bringing about such a transformation in the lives of those upon whom it was brought to bear. While he insisted that salvation was of God, there is ample evidence that the techniques he used to bring man and God together so that salvation could take place, did make use of certain well known and accepted educational methods of spiritual growth and development.

CHAPTER III

SOME EDUCATIONAL ASPECTS OF WESLEY'S PREACHING MINISTRY

1. Wesley's Concept of the Ministry

a. As seen by Him

John Wesley had a very high regard for the place and work of the Christian minister. He expected a minister to be a Christian in the full spiritual sense of the word. The minister was a man to him, but a very special man, one who was set apart to stand between God and man in the things pertaining to God, in the "nearest and most endearing relation" [1] both to God and to man. He was the possessor of the greatest blessing which could be bestowed on any man - that of following in the footsteps of those "ambassadors of Christ" who were as "burning and shining lights"[2] seventeen hundred years before.

A minister to him was a declarer of the "whole counsel of God," a preacher of the "whole gospel," one who had the "mind of Christ" and who walked as "Christ walked," [3] "an overseer of the Church of God," "a guide of souls," "a leader of the flock," [4] "a shepherd of souls" [5] "an ambassador of Christ," "a shepherd of never dying souls,"

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1. Works, 10:498.
2. Ibid., 10:500.
3. Ibid., 10:456.
4. Ibid., 10:481ff.
5. Ibid., 10:486.

"a watchman over the Israel of God," "a steward of the mysteries which the 'angels desire to look into' "[6] "one whom God had called to 'watch over the souls of others, as they that must give account to Him.' " [7]

The minister's relation to his flock was that of a shepherd, because it was his task to go before, to guide his sheep in the way of truth and holiness, to refresh them with the words of eternal life, to feed them, to nourish them, to train them up in outward and inward holiness until they came to the "stature of the fulness of Christ," and to watch over the souls of the flock with earnestness, seriousness, care and diligence.[8]

The minister of God was to abstain from all evil and even the appearance of evil, however innocent in word and work. He was to be an example to his people both in public and private. His whole life was to be dedicated to God in praising Him and serving his fellow man. His manner was to be humble, gentle, mild and serious, but nevertheless happy. He was a man sent from God to guard and assist the poor in any way possible, to guide them against temptation and danger of every kind. He was a worker with God in "bringing many children to glory."

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6. Ibid., 10:497.
7. Ibid., 10:481.
8. Cf. Works, 7:110.
9. Cf. Works, 10:488.

Being called of God and thus qualified for the work, the minister was to "comfort, exhort, and instruct those who were athirst for God or who walked in the light of his countenance."[10] Nothing was to prevent him from doing his work, not another job, illness, weather, a mob, or even a wife. He expected married preachers to be as unincumbered as the unmarried ones. (In this he, himself, set the example.) His one business on earth was to "save souls." [11] He was to "promote. . . vital, practical religion; and by the grace of God to beget, preserve, and increase the life of God in the souls of men." [12]

It was not the work of any minister to preach so much or to take care of any particular flock, but to save just as many souls as he possibly could. His work was to bring people to "repentance" and by the help of God train them up in the way of holiness, which, he insisted, was so necessary for salvation. [13]

> He was
>
> to 'seek and to save that which is lost'; to bring souls from Satan to God; to instruct the ignorant; to reclaim the wicked; to convince the gainsayer; to direct their feet into the way of peace, and then keep them therein; to follow them step by step, lest they turn out of the way, and advise them in

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10. Letters, 5:192.

11. Ibid., 3:148.

12. Ibid., 3:192.

13. Cf. Works, 8:310.

> their doubts and temptations; to lift up them that fall; to refresh them that are faint; and to comfort the weak hearted; to administer various helps, as to the variety of the occasions require, according to their several necessities. [14]

b. As Revealed in His Preaching

Bready estimated that Wesley preached over 46,000 sermons during his lifetime. [15] Preaching was his medium of taking the message of salvation to a people of whom the churches of the day had no concern. He preached and exhorted at every opportunity and he kept a record of what he preached, and where, from 1747 to 1761. Some of his sermons were preached on the inspiration of the moment, but many of them were carefully written out and used as doctrinal standards by his followers. The forty-four sermons contained in the first four volumes, together with his "Explanatory Notes upon the New Testament" were regarded by him and accepted by his preachers as a summary of his teaching and beliefs. And it is known that he looked on these sermons with high regard, for even years later he felt incapable of improving on them. [16]

However, the quality of these written sermons does not explain him as a preacher. While some of them did cause people to be convicted by reading them, they do not in themselves explain

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14. Ibid., 8:177ff.
15. Cf. Bready, John W., Faith and Freedom, p. 41.
16. Cf. Journal, 6:209.

his effectiveness for, as with other great preachers, the personal equation was the most potent fact of his preaching. Curnock in the Journal bears this out when he calls attention to the fact that according to the testimony of contemporary hearers and witnesses, his appearance, voice, and intense earnestness accounted for much of the success of his preaching. He was at ease wherever he preached, whether in a church, hall, cottage, castle, or in the open air. He was always ready with something appropriate for the occasion. [17]

So completely was he devoted to God that he could see spiritual significance in objects he passed on a walk through a garden or a trip to the museum. And, of course, there were some favorite texts that he used over and over, such as "My yoke is easy, and my burden is light." [18] Often he used the Psalm for the day [19] or part of the Lesson of the day [20] for his text. Sometimes a poor sermon he heard caused him to "rescue the poor text out of so bad hands." [21] A storm could give inspiration for a text. [23] Sometimes he went into the pulpit without

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17. Cf. Ibid., 6:248.
18. Ibid., 6:42.
19. Journal, 8:12.
20. Ibid., 8:16.
21. Journal, 3:65.
22. Ibid.
23. Cf. Journal, 2:229.

knowing what he would preach, but opened the New Testament and preached on what caught his eye. [24] Or he took the Scripture which came in due course to be explained. [25] On August 30, 1739, he "summed up" what he had been preaching on faith, holiness, and good works. [26] On September 12, 1739, he "exhorted the people to Christian living." [27]

Wesley gave to his preaching a body as well as a soul and this body was a complete one. He was a living example of what he believed and preached as he touched the many areas of the lives of his people. Their cares were his cares, their diseases - his illness, their souls' state - his cross, their welfare his mission. He so completely captivated the people who heard him that rain, cold, mobs, riots, drummers, or even herds of cattle driven in the midst of the congregation could not drive them away. They followed him from town to town to hear him, and often went to his lodging place after services to hear him more.

2. Preaching with a Purpose.

a. To Reform Sinners

Two facts stand out as one tries to understand just what John Wesley was trying to do in the sermons that he preached up and down the highways and hedges of England. The first is that

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24. Cf. Journal, 7:287.
25. Cf. Journal, 2:210.
26. Cf. Ibid., 2:265.
27. Ibid., 2:274.

John Wesley looked on man as a poor, lost sinner, utterly without God and utterly without good in his life, and utterly helpless as far as changing his present state is concerned. The second fact is that God is an all wise, all powerful, all loving Savior who is both willing and anxious to pardon man's past offences through the merits of Christ and to completely renew the image of God in man in and through the new birth.

On the one hand, it was man who needed help, but who was completely unaware of his present state or his need of help or of the love of God. On the other hand, there was a loving God willing and anxious to help and to save man from his sins, but unwilling to save man against his will, thus violating his liberty. Thus God must stand by patiently waiting for the poor wretched sinner to turn to Him for the love and the help He was so anxious to give. Wesley was aware of these facts and through his preaching he endeavored to bring man and God together, where salvation could take place. In some measure at least every sermon was aimed at inviting men to take the step of faith, to convince them that it was the right thing to do, to offer Christ as a means of help and then to direct them to the way of higher righteousness.

Wesley felt that God had seen fit to use him, however unworthy, to reform many of his "fellow sinners" and to make them into living witnesses of inward and pure religion. From 1738, when he had come to a vital religious experience himself, his one aim had been to convince all men who would hear what true Christianity really was and to "persuade them to embrace it." [28]

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28. Works, 8:249.

As McConnell has pointed out, where the deists had insisted that there was no news from God, or the Calvinists had made the gospel bad news, Wesley endeavored to convince the masses that the gospel was good news from God. [29] His emphasis was on love and his conception of salvation was not only an escape from hell, but an escape from sin. And however large or small his audience, Wesley's theme was always "salvation" and his aim "the regeneration of sinners." [30] He was not concerned with mere opinions of orthodoxy, but in leading men to repent.

Wesley recognized the necessity of changing the inner man. It was not enough to break up a gambling ring, close ale houses, or enforce the laws against prostitutes. He saw the necessity of changing the state of the soul as well as changing the environment for he believed that it was God's design to raise up the Methodists "not to form any new sect, but to reform the nation, particularly the Church; and to spread Scriptural holiness over the land." [31]

In his Earnest Appeal he pointed out that he endeavored to make the people to whom he preached morning and evening "virtuous and happy, easy in themselves and useful to others;" that he attempted to lead them to "heaven; and to God who was the judge, and the lover of all, and to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant." [32] He aimed his preaching at the "heart" to

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29. Cf. McConnell, Francis, John, John Wesley, p. 94.

30. Cf. McNeill, John Thomas, Books of Faith and Power, p. 182.

31. Works, 8:299.

32. Cf. Ibid., 8:8

awaken man, to create within him a desire to flee from the wrath to come, to find means of salvation, to turn to the Scriptures and other good books to substantiate what he heard and read, to talk of what he read and felt, to pray, to meet with the congregation, to take the Lord's Supper, to continue in this way until God speaks to his heart "Thy faith hath saved thee, go in peace." [33]

b. To Inform the Mind

In the early days almost all of his preaching was aimed at securing justification or pardon for sinners, but once this was achieved he worked just as hard to "stir up" the grace that was in these "babes in Christ" that they might go on to conquer sin - to achieve perfection. [34] He felt that it was his duty to "guide," "instruct," and "govern" the flock. [35]

He aimed at helping people become not "almost but altogether Christians." [36] On April 24, 1765, looking back over the thirty to forty previous years, he could say, . . ."all my designs, and thought, and care, and labour, were directed to this one point - to advance the kingdom of Christ upon earth." [37] To him it was a matter of "propagating vital religion." [38]

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33. Cf. Works, 5:198ff.
34. Cf. Works, 8:283.
35. Letters, 3:184.
36. Works, 5:17ff.
37. Works, 10:355.
38. Journal, 5:91.

He aimed at helping man to know himself as "an everlasting spirit, which came forth from God, and was sent down into a house of clay, not to do his own will, but the will of Him that sent him;" to know the world as "a place in which he is to pass a few days or years;" and to know God as "his father and his friend, the parent of all good, the center of the spirit of all flesh, the soul of happiness of all intelligent beings." [39]

He longed to see the religion of love and joy and peace established in the world having its seat in the inmost soul and showing itself by doing good and avoiding evil. [40] He was not content that others should have to follow the route he took in the search for peace, but that they should profit by his experience in finding the "straight way to the religion of love even by faith." [41] "....our constant labour is to bring all the world to the religion which you feel, to solid, inward, vital religion." [42] He looked on his work "not to make Church of England men, or Baptists, but Christians, men of faith and love." [43]

Wesley endeavored to wound, to lay bare the sins and shortcomings of the soul along with one's inability to help oneself, and to cut man off from all "false supports and vain dependencies." [44]

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39. Cf. Works, 5:427.
40. Cf. Works, 8:3ff.
41. Ibid., 8:4.
42. Ibid., 8:27.
43. Letters, 3:37.
44. Journal, 2:294.

He endeavored to cause man to see himself as he was and to turn his attention toward God who could help him. When man came to see himself as a sinner, he would become aware of God against whom he had sinned and would seek to know God who could forgive his sins.

Wesley did not let the matter stop here. He aimed at presenting and having accepted a body of content material that would so inform the mind, open the eyes and enlarge the heart, that man could know God and the means of grace offered by Him. He endeavored to "instill into the people a few favorite tenets which included the love of God, the love of one's neighbor, and the golden rule." [45]

When he found that very little had been written or preached that was worthwhile on the subject, he felt constrained to preach a sermon on God's Omnipresence. [46] The same thing called forth his sermon on Redeeming the Time. [47] In much of his preaching he aimed at presenting the facts of man's Christian duty and encouraging him to walk therein. [48]

In some sermons it is clear that he aimed only at making the meaning of the Scripture clear. The rest he was willing to leave to God. In his sermon "The Important Question" he

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45. Works, 8:67.

46. Cf. Works, 7:238.

47. Cf. Ibid., 7:67.

48. Cf. Ibid., 7:147.

attempted to make clear what it meant for a man to gain the whole world, to lose one's soul, and what one gains by gaining the world and losing his soul.[49] In "a Call To Backsliders" he endeavored to make clear those passages of Scripture which backsliders held to as reasons for their helpless state.[50] The sermon on "Lazarus and Dives" is but an "unfolding" of the Scriptures as it was in the case of the series on the Sermon on the Mount.

> Essentially the task was to communicate to needy souls the gospel by which they might be saved. But it involved far more than an impersonal proclamation. Wesley solicitiously piloted inquirers and converts as they broke from the bondage of futility of the irreligious life and entered on a course of purposeful cultivation of holiness.[51]

On September 3, 1756, Wesley wrote Sam Walker these words:

> I have one point in view - to promote so far as I am able, vital, practical religion; and by the grace of God to beget, preserve, and increase the life of God in the souls of men.[52]

To accomplish this mission he directed his appeal to every aspect of the life of man. He appealed to the curiosity of the people, for as he appeared in the village squares and began singing hymns to attract attention to his preaching that was to follow, there must have been many who came to hear, with the feeling of what kind of show is this? For people with little to do,

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49. Cf. Works, 6:493.
50. Cf. Ibid., 6:515.
51. McNeill, op. cit., p. 182.
52. Letters, 3:192.

curiosity runs rampant and a man in a clerical garb, singing a spiritual ballad of heaven was something entirely new and interesting. Curiosity brought them, his manner captivated them, and his message struck chords long dormant but capable of great activity. Through this curiosity a need was to be revealed - a need for salvation - for which the religion of Jesus Christ was the answer.

He appealed to their helplessness. At St. Ives he "invited all guilty, helpless sinners who were conscious they 'had nothing to pay' to accept of free forgiveness." [53] When preaching at one of the poor houses, it was not uncommon for him to use such texts as 'When they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both.' [54]

Wesley made use of fear whenever he felt the occasion demanded it, for he felt that while it might be unreasonable to frighten a man to heaven, it was not at all unreasonable to frighten him away from hell. It was to fear that he appealed when at Perth in 1774, he found the people wholly unaware of their need for salvation. In endeavoring to "stir up" the people, he preached at five on 'Awake, thou that Sleepest,' at seven on 'Where their worm dieth not,' and in the evening on 'I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God.' [55] At Loden he

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53. Journal, 3:88.

54. Cf. Journal, 2:178.

55. Cf. Journal, 6:20.

attempted to awaken the careless ones when he "opened and enforced those awful words," 'where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.'[56] On visiting the children at Mr. Andrew's school, he found the little girls readily "acceptable" to the gospel, but the boys were not so "acceptable" until he "set before them the terrors of the Lord." [57]

Wesley appealed to reason. He had great faith in the power of truth to change man. While presenting the facts regarding the necessity for constant communion, he suggested:

> If those who have hitherto neglected it on any of these pretenses will lay these things to heart, they will, by the grace of God, come to a better mind, and never more forsake their own mercies. [58]

When preaching at St. Mary's in 1744, he asked his hearers not to steel their hearts against receiving a blessing at his hands. He was willing to present the facts and then leave it to their own consciences, guided by the word of God, to determine whether or not what he said concerned each individual present. [59]

In a day of reason he preached sermons based on reason and in them he appealed to his hearers on this wise:

> Who then is a wise man, and endued with knowledge among you? Let him resolve this day, this hour, this moment, the Lord assisting him, to choose in all the preceeding particulars the more excellent way... [60]

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56. Cf. Ibid., 6:304.

57. Journal, 5:443.

58. Works, 7:157.

59. Cf. Works, 5:48.

60. Works, 7:37.

He appealed to the "common man" with such statements as "Hardly in England. . . have I found so plain, so earnest, so simple a people,"[61] or ". . . I found a large number of plain, artless people, just fit for the gospel. . ."[62] He appealed to their imagination. He continually held before the people some outstanding example of Christian living and encouraged them to follow this example. A woman dying of what was probably tuberculosis of the bone, could still spend her time praising God with "tears of joy for dealing 'so mercifully' with her."[63] When one Thomas Westell was arrested for preaching (as a vagrant), Wesley asked "for what pay could we procure men to do this service, to be always ready to go to prison, or to death?"[64]

By means of these word pictures, he continually painted illustrations of the love of God, the good life, the horrors and evil of the evil life, and he was aware that he himself must set the example in his own life. What he asked others to do he must do first. What he asked others to leave undone, he must not do.[65] He made himself one of the people. He convinced them that he himself was a sinner for whom Christ had died. Thus he made the righteousness of Christ his own. It was but the next step

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61. Journal, 6:319.
62. Ibid., 6:318.
63. Journal, 4:285.
64. Works, 1:473.
65. Cf. Letters, 2:161.

to invite all who heard him to go and do likewise.

He appealed to the feelings also. In his Journal on 17 June, 1742, he noted that twice during the day while preaching at Sheffield he had to stop in the midst of his sermon because "our hearts were so filled with a sense of the love of God, and our mouths with prayer and thanksgiving." [66] On another occasion it was necessary to "break off preaching that we might pray and give thanks to God." [67]

This does not mean that Wesley was unduly emotional or that his work was carried on on this level. On the contrary, while being filled with a love of humanity, Wesley was a master of his passion and emotion. He mastered mobs by the sheer force of absolute self possession. There was no place in his sermons for the sensational or the affectionate. He urged the acceptance of a new life in a clear, straightforward, but impressive manner. He had the ability to tap the sources of emotion and feeling and to direct its flow into worthwhile channels. He was much more interested in the life and character which emotion could produce than he was in the nature and value of an emotional state.

c. Preaching for Decisions

In answer to the question, "what is the best method of preaching?" Wesley suggested four things. (1) to invite. (2) To convince. (3) To offer Christ, and (4) To build up.

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66. Journal, 3:25ff.

67. Ibid., 3:55.

This procedure was to be followed in some measure in every sermon. Again, in a series of "smaller advices relative to preaching" he carried this even further. Among other things, he advised solemnity before the congregation, plain texts rigidly adherred to, moderation in allegorizing or spiritualizing, avoidance of the awkward or affected gesture, phrase, or pronunciation, quaint, though fashionable words as "object, originate, very, high, et cetera" and clownishness in speech and dress.[68] It is evident from the record that he made use of these rules in his own preaching.

In writing to Ebenezer Blackwell in 1751, he urged that the first preaching at a place should be a general declaration of the love of God to sinners and His willingness to save all. Following this, the law was to be preached in the "strongest, the closest, the most searching manner possible; only intermixing the gospel here and there, and showing as it were afar off." More and more the gospel was to be mixed in, as more and more were convinced of sin, but this was not to be done too suddenly lest the wounds be healed too quickly. This was done to beget faith and raise up to spiritual levels those humbled by the preaching of the law.[69]

The law was to be preached now and then even to those who were justified. It was to be kept constantly before the eyes of all for it not only convicts and enlightens, but strengthens and sustains.[70]

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68. Cf. Works, 8:317.

69. Cf. Letters, 3:80.

70. Cf. Ibid., 3:81.

To those who were "earnest but feeble minded" he suggested the mixture of law and the gospel according to their needs, for such preaching of the law teaches them how to walk in Christ. It both sustains and strengthens their spiritual lives. The commands as well as the promises of Christ were food equally substantial for the soul.[71]

On another occasion he set forth these same ideas in a more simple version when he insisted that every true minister of Christ should (1) preach the law of Christ to convince of sin, (2) offer free pardon, through faith in His blood to all convinced sinners, and (3) to preach His law again, as a rule for those who believe.[72]

A look at the texts Wesley used in and around Bristol beginning April 2, 1739, shows quite clearly how far he carried this out. The first day he preached a stock sermon that he had used on board the Simmonds en route to America,[73] and the next day he began to proclaim "the good tidings of salvation" as evidenced by the texts listed here:

> The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me. . .
> I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely.
> The Power of God unto Salvation
> Ho, everyone that thirsteth, come ye to the waters
> If any man thirst, let him come to me and drink
> Christ, made of God unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification and redemption
> When they had nothing to pay he frankly forgave them both

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71. Cf. Ibid., 3:79ff.

72. Cf. Journal, 3:16.

73. Cf. Journal, 2:171.

His blood cleanseth us from all sin
Christ, our wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption
The Pharisee and the Publican
His blood cleanseth us from all sin
Ye have not received the spirit of bondage again unto fear, but ye have received the Spirit of adoption whereby we cry, abba, father.[74]

Between these sermons he was expounding such Scriptures as the Epistle to the Romans and the Acts. All through the day and evening he was meeting with the societies, conversing with individuals, praying, visiting, singing and preaching to the prisoners and the poor-house inmates. These personal contacts afforded him an excellent opportunity to follow through on what had been presented in the sermon, to clarify points not clear to some individual and to press the matter home for conviction. Furthermore, they must have revealed additional areas of need to be covered in sermons to follow.

Ten days after launching such a campaign in Bristol he noted in his Journal that twelve persons were convinced; the next day two more were "seriously affected." And on the next another was convinced.[75] From then on they came in ever-increasing numbers to cry out to God for pardon. Many were cut to the heart and many were comforted. On April 26, 1739, revival fires broke out in Newgate prison.[76]

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74. Cf. Works, 1:185ff.
75. Cf. Journal, 2:178.
76. Cf. Ibid., 2:190.

His preaching of this type caused many to be "offended" and to cry out to God, but he had the ability of making people feel that he was one of them and he enlisted their help in praying for those who needed help. Some people came to the services out of curiosity, and became convinced while there.[77] Others were convinced of their sins by reading one of John Wesley's sermons.[78] Wesley's father had preached at Epworth for forty years, and he himself had labored there without results, but when Wesley came there with a series of sixteen sermons of the type shown above, the "fruit appeared." He gave full credit to the seeds sown by his father, but the same thing happened in places where his father had not preached.[79]

His sermons were simple. He insisted that he would no more write (nor preach) in fine style than he would wear a fine coat. He insisted that the language of a sermon be "plain, proper, and clear, and it is enough."[80] He felt that God had revealed to men how to speak; therefore if one is to speak in the name of God let him speak as the "oracles of God." No more ornament was ever needed than was to be found in the sentence which he felt was the "sum" of the gospel: "We love Him, because He first loved us."[81]

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77. Cf. Ibid., 2:187.
78. Cf. Ibid., 2:190.
79. Cf. Journal, 3:24.
80. Works, 6:187.
81. Ibid.

Because they were so simple, they had a directness about them which must have made them appealing even to "men of reason". His sermons had the power to make the listener feel that they were for him alone.[82] With no desire to impress anyone he proceeded to tell his audience what he was going to do and then he did it in the simplest way possible.[83] He insinuated nothing. What he spoke at all, he spoke so all could hear and understand.

This does not mean that he could not rebuke or speak firmly when needed, because he felt it his duty to proclaim the whole counsel of God. He designed plain truth for plain people. He labored to avoid old words hard to understand, and to forget all that he had ever read except the inspired writers so that he could preach from the thoughts of his heart. He was a man of one book in his preaching. He listened and learned of God and then spoke what he had heard and was taught.

The simplicity of his preaching is evidenced in the series of sermons on the Sermon on the Mount which he felt revealed the teaching method of Jesus. Here one finds the simplest kind of expository preaching - preaching which might easily be used as a catechism for "babes in Christ." He took the verses of scripture in groups of three to five and explained them in simple question and answer form. "Who is it that is here speaking?" "It is the Lord of Heaven." "Who are the blessed or the poor

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82. Cf. Journal, 6:293.

83. Cf. Works, 5:17.

in spirit?" "What is the kingdom of God?" "What is it to mourn?" "Who are the meek?" "What do the meek get?" "Who are the pure in heart?" [84]

Wherever he went in the early days, he faced opposition, but this did not deter him from his task. "If God sends me, people will hear," he replied, when advised not to go into Scotland. He faced opposition when it came, but he made every effort to avoid whatever might engender strife by refusing to preach controversial subjects. He put his whole emphasis on "the religion of the heart and justification by faith." [85] He had learned that where these truths were proclaimed, the Spirit of God came to change men in due time. [86] It was his task to press these saving truths home at every opportunity to secure results.

His sermon on Justification by Faith is a good illustration of his efforts to follow through in his preaching. He was not content to preach and just hope that some good was done. He was not content to let down his nets where the fish were. He closed the net and drew it in to secure conviction and acceptance then and there. He pressed the matter home.

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84. Cf. Works, 5:251.

85. Works, 10:356.

86. Cf. Works, 6:281.

> Thou ungodly one, who hearest, or readest these words! thou vile, helpless, miserable sinner! I charge thee before God, the judge of all, go straight unto him, with all thy ungodliness. Take heed thou destroy not thy own soul by pleading thy righteousness, more or less. Go as altogether ungodly, guilty, lost, destroyed, deserving and dropping into hell; and thou shalt find favor in his sight, and know that he justifieth the ungodly. As such thou shalt be brought unto the blood of sprinkling, as an undone, helpless, damned sinner. Thus look unto Jesus! There is the Lamb of God, who taketh away thy sins! Plead thou no works, no righteousness of thine own! No humility, contrition, sincerity! In no wise. That were, in very deed, to deny the Lord that bought thee. No: plead thou, singly, the blood of the covenant, the ransom paid for thy proud, stubborn, sinful soul. Who art thou, that thou seest and feelest both thine inward and outward ungodliness? Thou art the man. I want thee for my Lord! I challenge thee for a child of God by faith. The Lord hath need of thee. Thou who feelest that thou art just fit for hell, art just fit to advance his glory; the glory of his free grace, justifying the ungodly and him that worketh not. O come quickly! Believe the Lord Jesus; and thou, even thou, art reconciled to God.[87]

This is also evidenced in such sermons as "The Almost Christian." There, after explaining in a very clear manner what it means to be almost and altogether a Christian, Wesley brings it to a close by a series of questions fired at the individual - with the staccato of a modern prosecuting attorney trying to break down a witness in a courtroom. Then follows instructions as to what to do - "awake, pray, cry aloud to God, believe."[88]

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87. Works, 5:64.

88. Ibid., 5:25ff.

Thus it is clear that while Wesley always insisted that salvation was of God, here are evidences that he actually made use of an educational process in bringing salvation and sinner together in a saving way. Through the medium of preaching, the gospel was proclaimed with such simplicity, directness and power that it not only wounded (to bring about an awareness of need) but also had the power to heal (through the commitment which it brought about) in the justification of the sinner. Through his sermons, saving truth was presented with the one end in view--that of helping man become a new creature.

What he did in his preaching was actually but an adaptation of his so-called "technique for instruction." It was here that he set forth the steps by which learning takes place. He suggested (1) an appeal to the known and the acceptable, (2) to present a statement of desire or need--the unhappiness of man, the presence of sin and evil which man hates and God abhors, (3) a picture of the true state of man, (4) picture of God ready and able to help man, (5) picture of what would happen if God did open the eyes of one's understanding, (6) a sketch of true religion, (7) state how this knowledge can be had, (8) encourage action-- start now-- pray to God for help.

This educational process is further revealed through the many references in his preaching which imply growth and development and which are part of an acceptable phraseology of the educational method of today. One feels that it was not by accident that he repeatedly used in his preaching such expressions as ploughing,

sowing, seeds, roots, rain and tender herb, fruit, grow up, harvest, time of refreshing, and being ripe for the gospel.

The record bears testimony to the fact that he spent his life sowing seeds of the gospel, cultivating the soil in which they could best grow, and trusting God for the harvest which would come in due season. Thus, unlike much of the preaching done today, here was preaching with a purpose aimed at meeting the needs of the people with whom he was closely associated and whose needs he recognized. Here was preaching which contained what experience and reason had taught him would help those who had those needs. Here was preaching that made its appeal not to any one of the senses but to all of the senses and repeatedly so, until man broke from sin and took on the way of righteousness. Here was far more than preaching for preaching's sake. Here was preaching which had grown out of the awareness of the needs of the people and contained the honest efforts of a consecrated "teacher" to meet those needs.

CHAPTER IV

WESLEY'S USE OF HYMNS

1. His Regard for Singing

On the day after Charles Wesley was converted, he wrote "Where Shall My Wandering Soul Begin" and thus began a long and fruitful work as a writer of hymns. As soon as John Wesley felt his heart strangely warmed, he found his brother to tell him the good news and they sang a hymn together. Thus John and Charles Wesley began this new phase of their work as ministers of the gospel singing, and they never stopped. Nor did they let those with whom they worked stop. They not only gave them something to sing about, but they supplied them with hymn books from which they could sing. Together they published twenty-three collections of hymns, many of which contained instructions not only for singing, but for the leading of singing.

The Methodists were happy people and the gospel they preached made people happy, and happy people sing. The Methodists sang everywhere - at meetings, at home, at work, and the Wesleys saw to it that they had something worthwhile to sing about. The importance of singing with the Wesleys can be seen in the number of times that John Wesley mentioned it in his Journal. Only prayer and conversation are mentioned a

greater number of times.[1]

This is understandable when it is recalled that John Wesley had been with the Moravians and had observed their use of hymns not only as a means of worship, but as a means of teaching the Christian way of life.

But the important thing here is not where he got the idea, but the use he made of it once he had it. And we do know that singing was a vital and most meaningful part of the worship and work of the people called Methodists. Wesley appreciated the value and power of singing. He had a concern for the smallest detail in the use of hymns and he passed these gifts on to the people.

In the Preface to "Sacred Melody: or a Choice Collection of Psalm and Hymn Tunes: with a Short Introduction," Wesley included certain directions for congregational singing. They were intended to make the singing part of divine worship more acceptable to God, and more profitable to all concerned. To achieve this, he suggested: (1) that everyone join in the singing, including the minister. Nothing was to prevent it; (2) that singing was to be done "lustily" and with "good courage". The people were to sing out without fear or shame; (3) that they were to sing "modestly"; that is, they were to try for harmony. "Bawling" was not to be tolerated; (4) that the tempo of the hymns was to be observed; (5) that most important of all, they were to sing "spiritually" with an aim to please God and to

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1. Cf. Journal, 2:72n.

understand what they sang.[2]

To Wesley the singing of a hymn or psalm in an operatic manner, where the singers sing different words at the same time, was an "insult to common sense" and "a burlesque upon public worship" and "a mixture of profaneness and absurdity." [3]

He insisted that the people stand while singing. He encouraged all to sing and to learn the words of the hymns by giving them out "line by line." He encouraged them to follow the leader in avoiding discordant notes[4] and to concentrate on the words they were singing.

He encouraged his people to attend "singing meetings" and he even insisted that attendance records be kept of those who did. [5] Children were taught to sing and he spoke very highly of the methods used in the Sunday School at Bolton-le Moors, where singing was taught to one hundred children as part of their training. [6] He was aware of the power of the singing of hymns by children as a means of bringing sinners to salvation.[7]

But Wesley not only set standards to be followed by his people in making singing a meaningful part of his services, he

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2. Cf. Works, 14:358ff.
3. Journal, 6:312.
4. Cf. Journal, 8:63n.
5. Cf. Journal, 5:221.
6. Cf. Journal, 7:377.
7. Cf. Journal, 3:261.

actually put them into practice himself. Even though there was a "singer's seat" in front of him at his services, it was not unusual for him to direct the singing himself, giving directions to the singers with his hands.[8] He refused to tolerate poor singing. He did not hesitate to stop it at any time to make suggestions he felt were needed to improve it.[9]

He insisted all during his lifetime that the hymns used were to be selected with care by one who knew their meaning and how they fitted into what went before and what was to follow. Enough of each hymn was to be used as seemed expedient to "raise the soul" to God. Singing was to be done by the whole congregation; "...standing before God, and praising him lustily and with good courage." [10]

2. To Gain Attention

Singing had been a part of his first experience with field preaching and Wesley ever after made use of hymns in the market places or in the field, not only as part of the service he was conducting there, but for the specific purpose of attracting attention.

Wesley was aware that much of the entertainment of that day came in the form of professional entertainers appearing in the village squares as wrestling teams, bear baiters, and cock

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8. Cf. Journal, 8:50.
9. Cf. Ibid., 8:63.
10. Letters, 3:227ff.

fighters to put on their shows when the people had assembled. They were accustomed to seeing this sort of thing from time to time, but to find a clergyman in full canonicals walking through the streets, or standing in the square singing one of the psalms or a hymn was certainly out of the ordinary. And, as Rattenbury has noted, who could pass by when he sang,

> All ye that pass by
> To Jesus draw nigh
> To you is it nothing that Jesus should die?[11]

As they paused, they who had previously heard only the unintelligible droning out of psalms in the churches, must have been amazed to hear further,

> Come, sinners, to the gospel feast
> Let every soul be Jesus' guest
> Ye need not one be left behind
> For God hath bidden all mankind.
>
> Sent by my Lord, on you I call;
> The invitation is to all
> Come, all the world; come, sinner, thou!
> All things in Christ are ready now.
>
> My message as from God receive
> Ye all may come to Christ and live;
> O let his love your heart constrain
> Nor suffer Him to die in vain.[12]

Curiosity aroused by his singing such hymns as this brought many people to hear Wesley. When they came, he fitted his sermons to their needs. And in a day of reasoning, he "proved them sinners on their own principles." Many came out of curiosity and remained to tremble.[13]

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11. Rattenbury, John Ernest, Wesley's Legacy to the World, p.279.

12. Ibid., p.280.

13. Journal, 5:82.

3. As a Teaching Method.

John Wesley made use of his hymn books to teach a body of content material - the story of salvation. In the preface to "Hymns and Sacred Poems" which he published in 1740 he took the words of St.Paul "By grace are ye saved through faith" and explained not only what they meant and were capable of bringing to bear in the life of the individual, but he actually described in detail the process whereby God usually brought about the new creature in one who would accept this faith that saves. Thus these were not hymns and verses for poetry's sake, but hymns with a message of salvation. A few of them describe

> this gracious gift of God. . . but the greater part of them relate to the way, rather than the end; either showing. . .the successive conquests of grace, and the gradual process of the work of God in the soul, or pointing out the chief hindrances in the way, at which many have stumbled and fallen.[14]

In the preface of the "Hymns and Sacred Poems" of 1745 he defended the doctrine of perfection on "the subject of many of the following verses."[15] And "A Collection of Hymns for the People Called Methodists" which appeared in 1780 contained

> . . .a distinct and full account of scriptural Christianity. . .a declaration of the heights and depths of religion, speculative and practical. . .strong cautions against the most plausible errors. . .(and) clear directions for making our calling and election sure; for perfecting holiness in the fear of God.[16]

Just as Wesley insisted that the hymns used in Methodist services be selected with care, he was concerned with the

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14. Works, 14:336.

15. Ibid., 14:340.

16. Ibid., 14:353.

selection of the hymns he included in the hymn books. They were not "carelessly jumbled" together - but carefully selected and arranged under proper heads according to the experience of real Christians.

A study of this hymn book of 1780 reveals just how much Wesley lived up to this statement for it contains the whole conception of religion. It begins with an invitation to all men to return to God. There are hymns on the pleasantness of religion, the goodness of God, the facts of heaven, hell, and the judgment. Following this there are hymns suitable for an evening service which might follow the one in the fields where the invitational hymns were sung and penitents were now ready to be brought inside. The next section deals with inward and outward religion. The latter, he felt, was useless without the former, and this is evidenced in these hymns. Both were to be sung to emphasize the former, however.

There were hymns to help those seeking inward religion and penitents seeking inward peace and God's pardon; and for believers, rejoicing, fighting, praying, watching, working, suffering, groaning for full redemption, brought to the birth, saved, interceding for the world. There were hymns intended for use in the Society meeting and for parting. There were hymns intended for use in a corporate experience of worship as well as those concerned with the personal aspects of finding God and salvation. The pronouns "I" and "my" of the first section of the hymnal become "we" and "our" in later sections.

Through this arrangement of his hymns for all situations and conditions one is aware that Wesley was ever conscious of his mission to invite, to encourage, to offer Christ and to build up. Hymns selected at random reveal the use he made of them to teach his people a body of content material - a way of life. What better way could the great central doctrine of Methodism be defined than in the words of the hymn, "Pure Universal Love Thou Art?" Here God's love is presented in words of the cross, discoverable by experience. It offers pardon for all. There is hope for everyone. [17]

The hymns of penitence tell the story of salvation by faith by using such phrases as these: "What shall I do?" "He only must show the way." "He who pities is gracious and kind." "Though I am sinful, his mercies exceed even my sin." "He pleads unweariedly for me." "His love is a boundless and bottomless sea of love." "I surrender all." And "Am content to be lost - if lost in Thy love." [18]

"O For a Thousand Tongues to Sing" tells the story of Charles Wesley's own religious experience written on the first anniversary of his conversion. The hymn "Arise My Soul, Arise" contains the essence of the history of the Methodist revival told in a better way than the sermons or pamphlets of Wesley. [19]

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17. Cf. Rattenbury, op. cit., p.92.

18. Cf. Ibid., p. 305.

19. Cf. Luccock, Halford E. and Hutchinson, Paul, The Story of Methodism, p. 114ff.

And 166 Sacramental hymns which were published in ten editions by the Wesleys were the hymns "whereby the Methodists interpreted Holy Communion and prepared themselves for it." [20]

The hymns selected with care to fit the message of the sermon afforded the people a means not only of taking the thoughts of the sermon home with them to recall to mind each time they were sung, but they were also the means of carrying the message of salvation to remote places where the preachers could never go with sermons. And the people, in committing them to memory, were learning not only words set to music but a body of practical and experimental theology as well. The Wesleys thus had the people singing the gospel story at work, at home, on trips, as they watched, as they prayed or wherever they were. Not all of his people could be preachers, but all of them could sing; all could have a part in that joyous expression of what they felt and knew of God's love.

In this connection one is reminded that this was not the first time singing had been used to spread the gospel, for baptized pagans of Charlemagne's empire remained pagans until the minstrels were instructed to sing the gospel to the people. [21] The Methodists became the "minstrels" of the eighteenth century.

Wesley also used hymns to provide his people with a body of content material which could be used as a ready means of bearing testimony at Class Meetings or with individuals. So thoroughly did the Wesleys saturate England with their songs of

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20. Rattenbury, op. cit., p. 306ff.

21. Cf. Ibid., p. 266.

the gospel that even so-called unbelievers sometimes quoted these hymns when death was near.[22] And it was a very common thing for one who had just been converted to describe his experience in the words of some one of the hymns.[23] Even the children sang of the awful state of the lost and the glorious state of the redeemed long before they knew what the words actually meant. Thus through the hymns Wesley was afforded another means of presenting a way of life about which he preached and urged the people to accept as the right way of life. By means of hymns these "seed thoughts" were sown repeatedly in the subconscious minds of the people. From there it was but a step for them to be recalled as part of one's own experiences as he endeavored to break from the bondage of sin to become a Christian in the fullest sense of the word. What the people lacked in training and experience they found in an inexhaustible supply of songs always at hand.[24]

The fact that the Methodist hymns were saturated with scripture passages from beginning to end gives evidence that Wesley was aware that hymns were a very useful means of teaching the Bible, which was so essential to the people called Methodists. No one could learn these hymns or even sing them without learning more and more of the scripture they contained.

The hymn "Wrestling Jacob" with its thirty verses is actually scripture set to music. It is a scriptural ballad telling the story of a man all alone wrestling with an adversary throughout the darkness of night. The struggle is terrific, but he manages to

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22. Cf. Journal, 6:183.

23. Cf. Ibid., 6:43.

24. Cf. Journal, 2:303.

hold out until dawn when in the light of day he discovers that his opponent is love and he breaks forth in triumphant rejoicing.

Piette calls attention to the fact that thousands of converts who never came in contact with the numerous printed words of the Wesleys, nevertheless

> devotedly conned, and incessantly thumbed, the pages of the hymn books from which, Sunday after Sunday they sang their songs of praise. While singing, their souls were stirred: and the hearts, even of the most sluggish, were wondrously inflamed. [25]

4. To Inspire and Unite The People

Soares points out that songs with simple melodies, with emphasis on the lyrics to include such religious words as grace, peace, salvation, joy, the cross, the crown, the throne, and the river of death, have long been recognized as part of the revival method. Half an hour of such group singing with concentration upon the symbols of religious faith produces a marked relaxation in the congregation, melts the divergent members into a unity, and prepares the way for the direction of the tide of emotions into the channel which the speaker may devise, and to that organization of experience which he wishes to effect. [26]

Brubacher recalls the use of psalmody by the early Christians to stir appropriate emotional attitudes to accompany their moral and religious instruction, and that Aristotle advocated the

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25. Piette, Maxim, John Wesley in the Evolution of Protestantism, p. 434.

26. Cf. Soares, Theodore G., Religious Education, p. 308.

use of music for that purpose.[27]

Wesley insisted that the Methodist hymns were not only poetry of the people, but that the "spirit of piety" breathed through them.[28] He recommended them to every pious reader as a

> means of raising or quickening the spirit of devotion, of confirming his faith, of enlivening his hope, and of kindling or increasing his love to God and man. When poetry thus keeps its place as the handmaid of piety, it shall attain, not a poor perishible wreath, but a crown that fadeth not away.[29]

Wesley felt that the "very end of music is to affect the passions,"[30] and he had great respect for its power to impress people of whatever status in life or salvation for good.[31] Just as music had been of assistance to him in finding salvation for his own soul, he used it to help others find theirs. Hymns were written with that purpose in mind. They were packed with emotion. There were not just hymns about sin, grace, redemption, peace; the people found that there were hymns about "my sin", "my grace," "my redemption," and "my peace." Thus singing them not only stirred the feelings, they drove home the message of salvation they contained.

Wesley used hymns to calm his people and to knit them into a closer bond of fellowship through suffering together when

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27. Cf. Brubacher, John S., The History of the Problems of Education, p. 324.
28. Cf. Works, 14:354.
29. Ibid.
30. Journal, 5:290.
31. Cf. Ibid., 5:106.

mobs and rioters threatened to break up his services. More than once when beset by mobs Wesley led his people in the singing of hymns such as:

> Though the sons of night blaspheme,
> More there are with us than them;
> God with us, we cannot fear;
> Fear, ye fiends, for Christ is here.
>
> Lo! to faith's enlightened sight
> All the mountain flames with light;
> Hell is nigh, but God is nigher,
> Circling us with hosts of fire. [32]

When hoodlums were hired to sing ballads near the Methodist services, Wesley led his people in the singing of hymns to offset them. [33] Following his example, his people came to associate persecution and suffering with the singing of hymns. When trouble came, they began to sing.

Of the thousands of hymns written by the Wesleys and borrowed from others with care and due regard to selection of those "judged to be the most scriptural, and the most suitable to sound experience," [34] there were collections of hymns suitable for any kind of experience. Besides those intended for public worship, there were collections for all types of religious services, for the observance of special days, for seasons of thanksgiving, calamity, invasion or tumult. There were hymns for children, families, masters and servants, funerals and domestic sorrows, for preachers and for the nation.

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32. Cf. Rattenbury, Op. cit., p. 286.

33. Cf. Journal, 2:215.

34. Works, 7:293.

The collections for families contained those suitable for the birth, the baptism or illness of a child, for a persecuting husband or an unconverted wife, for a family in want, for use at weddings or for an absent or sick friend. There were tea-hymns and work-hymns. There were hymns for all occasions, to be used by all to express common feeling and to unite hearts and minds in a common fellowship.

Thus it may be seen that John Wesley gave the people an ample supply of hymns to sing, but it is evident that this was not an end in itself, but rather a means to an end. He saturated England with gospel songs it is true, but in doing so he also saturated England with the gospel which they proclaimed. Through the method of singing the message of salvation every believer was thus to become the means of propagating the faith in an ever increasing way.

CHAPTER V.

THE USE OF THE PRINTED WORD

As is the case in many other areas of endeavor, Wesley was a pioneer in the field of providing "cheap and good books" for the masses of the people. Until he came on the scene, the travelling peddlers had been the only purveyors of cheap books and these Wesley found to be worthless from the educational and spiritual points of view. Thus sensing the need, Wesley devoted a large part of his life to the task of providing books for the people. No other leader before or after him made a wider, larger or more effective use of the pen and press than John Wesley did in waging war on the forces of ungodliness and ignorance of eighteenth century England.

Wesley first tasted printer's ink in 1733 when he published A COLLECTION OF FORMS OF PRAYER FOR EVERY DAY IN THE WEEK [1] and he continued to make an abundant and ever increasing use of it until shortly before his death. During his lifetime he wrote and published 233 different works [2] besides the numerous letters and other items which were not printed

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1. Cf. Journal, 1:100n.
2. Cf. Piette, op. cit., p. 202.

until after his death. One has only to turn the pages of his Journal to become aware of the wide areas of interest that his writings covered and the extent to which he made use of the numerous forms of the printed word in "delivering his soul" for the people of England. His use of the many forms of the printed word all reveal the breadth of his understanding of the needs as well as the opportunity that was his in eighteenth century England. Wesley wrote, revised and edited at every opportunity. He busied himself with this work at the various rooms, at the schools, on horseback, in carriage, and even when illness wracked his body and he was unable to carry on his usual work, he spent the time writing his Notes on The New Testament.[3]

In his use of the printed word, which flowed from the pen and press of John Wesley in a never ending stream, there is revealed a deliberate attempt on his part to sow seeds of righteousness which he felt would bear fruit in due season. With the preaching of the gospel of salvation by faith and with the acceptance of that gospel by the people who heard it, there arose a need on their part for a body of content material which could be used in furthering their knowledge of the "Bible religion" by which they had been justified and by which they were to work out their own salvation and growth in grace. As "babes in Christ" they needed help after the preaching was over and the preachers had moved on to other fields of endeavor.

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3. Cf. Journal, 4:91.

Wesley recognized this need and encouraged it for he was fully aware that the work of grace would die out in one generation if the Methodist people did not become "reading people." [4] He began with his preachers, by insisting that they spend at least five hours each day in reading the "most useful" books. Nothing was to prevent it. Even the lack of taste for reading was no excuse. It was to be cultivated if need be. One's desire to read only the Bible was not adequate either. One's inability to buy good books was not adequate justification for one's ignorance. He offered to give books up to the value of five pounds to any preacher who would read them. [5]

Wesley also insisted that the people be encouraged to read and study. It is evident that he saw a direct relationship between reading and the diffusion of good books among the people and the spiritual condition of those people. Repeatedly during the Conferences when the work was not progressing to his satisfaction the question was asked, What can be done to revive and enlarge it? Invariably a wider diffusion of good books, sermons and tracts, was suggested as one of the remedies. "The spreading of the books is always a means of increasing the awakening in any place," [6] wrote Wesley in 1781.

Wesley not only insisted that the most useful books be read, he actually took the initiative in making them available to the people.

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4. Cf. Letters, 1:xv.
5. Cf. Works, 8:315.
6. Letters, 7:86.

Good books were on sale at each Room and each Society was to be supplied with them at all times.[7] He charged his preachers with the task of covering the land with those books which were the most useful in fostering growth in grace and informing the minds of the people. He insisted that his preachers follow his example of obtaining money from the rich to buy books which could be given to the poor[8] and that the preachers carry books with them as they made their rounds. The people were encouraged to read them by making mention of these books in the public services. All during his life he insisted that the people were to be encouraged to read as well as to pray.[9] He was certain that much good had been done by the books which had been published, and more would be if they were spread more effectually.

1. The Sermons

One of the earliest attempts of Wesley to meet the needs of the people for assistance in understanding the Bible and the way of salvation which it contained was through the printing of his sermons. Some of these appeared in individual tract form and later in the Magazine, but in 1746 he printed "Sermons on Several Occasions" which was the first volume in a series of four which contained the substance of all that he had been preaching previously. Thus in a printed form, and at a price

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7. Cf. Letters, 4:312.
8. Cf. Works, 8:328.
9. Cf. Letters, 5:67.

they could afford to pay, the people were to have the sermons based on both reason and the Scriptures by which many of them were converted. These printed sermons made it possible for them to ponder and evaluate again and again those saving truths by which they had felt their hearts strangely warmed under the preaching of the Wesleys and the itinerant preachers.

In the volume which appeared in 1760 he included not only such sermons as Original Sin, The New Birth, Heaviness Through Temptation, Self Denial, The Cure of Evil Speaking, and The Use of Money, but certain other "advices" which he felt were needed. Advice to the Methodists in Regards to Dress, the Duties of Husbands and Wives, Thoughts on Christian Perfection and Christian Instruction, Extracted from a Late French Author, were among this collection and are evidence of his deliberate attempt to mold the lives of the people into a given pattern of Christian living.

These sermons were to become the body of content material which could be used repeatedly in substantiating and strengthening the faith and spiritual foundations of the people. And in addition, in the preface of the first edition Wesley included a first hand account of the way one receives such spiritual truth which may be used by the individual and taught to others. It was here that he described his withdrawal to the quietness of a home at Lewisham, where with only his Hebrew Bible and Greek Testament he endeavored to forget all that he had ever read and to find out the way to heaven and how to get there, both of which he knew were written in the Book of Books.

These written sermons, which were the substance of what he had been preaching to the multitudes, along with his Explanatory Notes on the New Testament, were regarded by him and accepted by his preachers as the summary of his teaching. Here was to be found the essence of what the Bible taught about "the way to heaven," a description of "the true, the scriptural, experimental religion" with nothing added and nothing left out. Thirty-two of these sermons had to do with the application of religious principles to daily living by which the people were to be thus guided in an ever increasing knowledge of God and a love for man. Thus here was to be found help not only for those who were just setting their faces toward heaven, but for those who already knew something of the religion of the heart.

2. Explanatory Notes

Wesley was not content in giving his people an interpretation of the gospel of faith through his sermons only, for he endeavored to make the whole Bible meaningful and understandable for them. His Explanatory Notes on The New Testament first appeared in 1755 and later in two additional editions. This work was undertaken, he wrote in the preface, "chiefly for plain, unlettered men, who understand only their mother tongue, and yet reverence and love the word of God, and have a desire to save their souls." [10] In it he endeavored to give them a translation of the New Testament which was clearer, stronger, and as consistent with the original tongues as possible. In doing this

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10. Works, 14:250ff.

he made a large use of Bengelius' GNOMON NOVI TESTIMENTE as well as the works of John Heylin, Philip Doddridge and others.

Ten years later he followed his Notes on the New Testament with his Explanatory Notes on the Old Testament which was largely taken from Matthew Henry's Exposition and other writers all of which he edited as he saw fit. To these he added his own comments and notes wherever he felt called to do so. And even though Wesley admitted his "imperfect acquaintance with the Hebrew tongue" he aimed here at giving "the direct literal meaning of every verse, of every sentence, and, as far as I am able, of every word, in the oracles of God." [11]

The Bible to Wesley was a book which should be loved and studied with filial reverence, and with eagerness to understand and obey its commands. And it was to this end that he painstakingly labored to give it to his people in a way that it could be understood and loved by them. Thus here one was to find a simple, direct and meaningful interpretation of the Scriptures themselves, along with an outline of the main sections of each book and a brief commentary on the author and the "chain of argument" of each. Here was to be found a literal, warm and intimate interpretation of the Scriptures which made it possible for what might have remained a closed book to become the living word of God to be understood and loved by all.

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11. Ibid., 14:266.

3. The Journal

One of the most important of all of John Wesley's efforts aimed at helping his people grow both mentally and spiritually was his Journal which covered the years of his life from 1735 to 1790. Written not only by days, but by hours and minutes of the days of those years, it is the account of John Wesley's own religious experience as it unfolded across the eighteenth century, and a record of those persons, places and events which made his one of the outstanding religious experiences of all times. Here in a recorded form, which all could read and know, was Wesley's witness to what God had done for him and told in such a warm, intimate and personal way that one who read it could not help but feel that what had happened to Wesley could happen to him also.

To read the Journal is to know Wesley the man and to know what he did and what he endeavored to do. His spirit stands forth on every page to report the progress of his own spiritual journey, but at the same time to advise and encourage others to follow in the way as well. Much of what appears in the Journal appeared in other forms also, but here in one collection one could find an expression of the mind, heart and labors of John Wesley and those with whom he worked.

As he published it in intervals covering two to three years it became a collection of resource material which could be used by men and women from all walks of life in their search for guidance in working out their own salvation. It contained not only the account of Wesley's own religious experience in detail, but the

accounts of the religious experience of countless other people who had accepted salvation by faith and had their hearts strangely warmed. Where his works on the Bible attempted to explain the meaning and value of the faith he declared, here was a record of how it could be applied to individual lives, and what the results would be when it was. It was a compendium of Christian experience, but it was more than that. It was a compendium of life at its best and as such it afforded food for thought for all classes of people as they turned their eyes toward eternity.

For the people on the farms and in the villages there were accounts of animals (4:32; 5:104; 5:291; 7:371), hailstones (5:40), bad roads (5:291) and far away people and places, (6:187), including the king and queen (4:145). For the adventuresome there were accounts of mobs (2:340), fires (4:242), press gangs (4:328), riots (5:508), floods (3:375) and wrecks at sea (4:362). For those seeking spiritual help there were hymns, scriptures, notes and comments, and testimonies of those who had found the gospel the answer to their needs (6:340, 194, 254). For the young it offered a way of life and a challenge to walk along a well travelled road (7:68). For the aged it offered evidences of hope and courage to face eternity. It not only pointed out that Methodists lived well but that they could die well also. The similarity in the description of the death bed scenes which it records bear testimony that the people had not only been instructed in how to live but how to die as well (6:53, 55). For the intellectual, it offered comments and evaluations of the literary contributions of the past and the present (4:450, 452n; 6:82, 202), or views of his own or those of others on electricity. (3:320; 5:247; 4:51, 53). For the sick and infirm

it offered suggested remedies and cures for the various ills of the day (4:156, 196, 277; 6:16, 148, 294).

Thus it can be seen that the Journal of Wesley touched life at every point and it endeavored to interpret the spiritual meaning and significance of all with which John Wesley came in contact. Here was more than a sermon preached by an itinerant preacher. Here was the written record, inspired and inspiring, to be used over and over again by all who so desired. It was the record of a man and a people endeavoring to live out the Gospel of Jesus Christ as earnestly and faithfully in the eighteenth century as it had been in the first.

4. The Letters

Wesley was aware of the shortcomings of preaching for he felt that more good was often done for souls in a person to person approach than from much preaching. A study of his letters, 2670 of which are now preserved (Letters 1:xiii), reveals the extent to which he made use of this means of carrying that idea of close discourse to people who were removed from him. He took every opportunity to be as close to his people as possible and letters made it possible for him to keep in touch with those who were removed from him.

Those who knew him, relate that he wrote just as he talked - with a clear, simple and direct style fitting the needs and station of the one to whom he was writing. He was capable of using Latin and Greek phrases to make a point clear to some learned friend, but he was also capable of adapting himself to the needs of a

youthful friend whom he might well address as "Dear Sammy." He had no concern for style for he wrote as the words came to him. Only when he was writing for the press did he concern himself with a style which he considered clear, pure and proper.[13]

Wesley loved people and because he did it is not at all surprising that he made such a wide use of letters to promote the work of the kingdom of God. While many of them were written in answer to some attack by letter or in the press, a far greater part of them had to do with Wesley's recognition of the needs of the people and his desire to meet those needs. He was never too busy to write letters of counsel to people in all parts of the country. Their needs, whether concerning the choice of a school, marriage, or the more important matter of the salvation of one's own soul, were always of utmost importance to him and worthy of his highest and best efforts in meeting those needs.

The letters, generally speaking, were of the same tenor as much of what he wrote for public consumption, but it was here that he made a personal effort to meet the needs of some individual. Where the larger works were intended for public scrutiny and liable to attacks on every point, thus causing him to work them out very carefully, in the letters he wrote in a more friendly and intimate way which was intended to go home to the heart of the reader. In writing, as in speaking, and in all else that he did, his purpose was to save souls.[14]

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13. Cf. Letters, 4:257.

14. Cf. Ibid., 4:257ff.

5. The Christian Library

The Christian Library, a fifty volume work of John Wesley, was begun in 1749 and completed in 1755, to provide a body of content material for his preachers. As stated in the complete title it contained extracts and abridgments of the best in the field of practical divinity in the England language. Growing out of his awareness of the fact that few men had either the time to read the vast number of books in this field or the ability to separate the good from the trash, Wesley thus endeavored to make a collection of what he considered the best and to make it available to his people.

To note the extent to which Wesley lived up to this ambitious undertaking one has only to turn the pages of this massive work. It began with selections from the Apostolic Fathers, which Wesley felt were second only in value to the Scriptures themselves. These were followed by sermons, letters, books of devotion, and treatises, which were taken largely from Clark's LIVES OF EMINENT MEN and which included certain biographical sketches and notes of his own. By these Wesley endeavored to show the effects of Christianity on daily living as revealed in the lives of these great personalities. And there were works of Cowley, Pascal and Bunyan included along with such advices as DIRECTIONS FOR MARRIED PERSONS. . .by William Whatley, which as the complete title pointed out, described the duties common to both husbands and wives, as well as those peculiar to each of them, and which Wesley himself could have used to greater advantage than he did.

While it was a failure from a financial standpoint and it did furnish his enemies with much ammunition which was later fired at him when views extracted from others were attributed to him, in its scope and purpose it was without an equal in the eighteenth century. Tyerman pointed out that it was a noble effort on the part of John Wesley

> to make the masses--his own societies in particular--acquainted with a galaxy of the noblest men the Christian Church has ever had. His design was to leave out whatever might be deemed objectionable or unimportant in sentiment, and superflous in language; to direct practical theology from logical technicalities and unnecessary digressions; and to separate the rich ore of evangelical truth from the base alloy of Pelagian and Calvinian error.[15]

6. The Complete English Dictionary

Wesley made every effort to make all that the Christian Library contained both clear and understandable, but to assist his "plain men" in understanding some of the so-called "hard words" to be found in some of the passages, he felt constrained to provide a Dictionary for them. And in the preface of it he made it clear that his purpose in doing so was not to make money but "to assist persons of common sense, and no learning, to understand the best English authors; and that with as little expense of either time or money as the nature of the thing will allow." [16] Wesley himself thought highly of this work and in the preface stated that it was not only the best, the cheapest, but the most correct Dictionary to be found anywhere. He recommended its

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15. Tyerman, Luke, The Life and Times of the Rev. John Wesley, M.A., Founder of the Methodists, 2:65ff.

16. Works, 14:248.

use to the reader--at least until a better one could be found.

Here it should be noted that since the Dictionary and certain other works such as the Primitive Physic were not in themselves of a spiritual nature their value to the revival effort must be seen in an indirect rather than a direct manner. Their value in fostering spiritual growth was actually in the contribution which they made to the general wealth of knowledge which was so essential to those who would work out their own salvation. In this manner, however, they helped to create an understanding of and a respect for Wesley and the other works of his which were intended to make clear the way of salvation. And however unconscious this may have been on the part of Wesley, he was making use of methods here which have long been employed by modern missionaries in reaching people for Christ indirectly by means of orphanages, schools, hospitals and examples of better farming methods. Actually these works were means of opening avenues through which the knowledge of salvation by faith could flow and in this connection they served their purpose well.

7. The Textbooks for Children

While there is much in his Journal and other works which were both understandable and helpful to children, there were certain works which Wesley provided primarily to meet the needs of the children in training them in "the way they should go." The foremost of these was his Instructions for Children which contained "the true principles of the Christian Education of Children" which were to be "instilled into them as soon as they could discern between good and evil." This work which was

largely taken from Abbé Fleury and M. Poiret, first appeared in 1743 and in a second edition in 1745, in answer to the need for a catechism for the children for he felt that the one provided by the Church of England was "utterly improper" for children of six and seven years of age.[17]

While it was intended primarily for the school children of Kingswood, Wesley thought so highly of his work that it became a source-book to be used by his preachers in instructing the children in the homes on the circuits. He insisted that the ministers be thoroughly acquainted with it and that they saw to it that the children committed it to memory in a way that was to make them understanding Christians and not mere parrots.

Instructions for Children was divided into two sections. The first contained what the child was expected to know about God, the creation, the fall and redemption of man, the means of grace, heaven and hell. His definitions in this section which were to be set to memory by the children give a clear indication of his conception of children being "small adults," who were not to be pampered in any way. For instance, he defined repenting as "being thoroughly convinced of our sinfulness, guilt and helplessness;" faith in Christ, "a conviction that Christ has loved me and given Himself for me;" holiness, "the love of God and of all mankind for God's sake."[18]

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17. Cf. Works, 13:33.

18. Cf. Tyerman, op. cit., 1:433.

The second section consisted of lessons pertaining to the regulation of one's desires, understanding, joys, and daily living. It is here that one finds a clear indication that to Wesley the Christian life was a pattern into which the child was to be conformed. Education in this connection became a matter of helping individuals fit into a pattern with little or no concern for the individuality of the person. In this, of course, Wesley was a product of his age. The sacredness of the personality of the individual as it is conceived today was unknown.

This is further borne out in his "Lessons for Children" which was his Bible-study book for the Kingswood School. In it he endeavored "to select the plainest and most useful portions of Scripture, such as the children may the more easily understand and such as it most concerns them to know." To be sure that it was understandable he added words of "explication" to the difficult passages.

Part one of these Lessons comprised fifty-four lessons taken largely from the books of Moses. Part two contained fifty-four lessons taken from the crossing of the Jordan River to the reign of Hezekiah. The third part contained fifty-seven lessons taken from Ezra, Nehemiah, Job, the Psalms and Proverbs. These, as the others, were to be learned in an "understandable way."

Wesley also provided histories, grammars and various latin works for his students when the need arose for them. These, as were the others, were intended to "inform the mind" of the children. He wrote A Compendium of Logic that he might instruct them in the "art of apprehending things clearly, judging

truly and reasoning conclusively" for this he felt was the very "art of learning and teaching; whether by convincing or persuading."[19] The art of logic was to him one of the most important aspects of one's education and he himself was a master of the art.

Thus through the printed word Wesley appealed to both the minds and the reason of the children and this was further supplemented by an appeal to the emotions through the use of preaching services, singing, prayers, and personal counseling on the part of Wesley and other ministers who saw the children as souls to be saved. The printed word was one of the means then by which he endeavored to charge the very atmosphere in which the children lived with the principles of the Christian life. Because of this charged atmosphere revival fires were likely to break out among the students at any time and they frequently did.

8. Tracts

Curnock revealed that there was a time in England when the name of John Wesley attached to a book or tract made those who saw it want to read what it contained. The name of Wesley came to be associated with that which invariably and inevitably said something that was worth reading. His message and his style were so well known that a public reading of even a small portion of some work of his was almost certain to cause some hearer to cry out, "that's John Wesley's."[20]

Such a recognition and appreciation of his worth and work came as a result of his long and painstaking efforts to sow

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19. Works, 10:483.

20. Letters, 1:xv.

broadcast over England thousands of Tracts and other bits of printed matter which were brief, understandable and to the point which were either sold for a penny or given away. Some of them were of inconsequent value as was his Serious Thoughts Concerning Godfathers and Godmothers, but to a large extent they were recorded thoughts of John Wesley on some need of the people which had been brought to his attention.

Many of these Tracts came into being as pastoral letters written by him in answer to some specific need within one or more of the Societies. They were "advices" which he wrote for his own people. Among this type were Advice to the People called Methodist, A Word to a Methodist, A Plain Account of the People Called Methodists, The Character of a Methodist, A Plain Account of Genuine Christianity, and A Short Address to the Inhabitants of Ireland. They were intended primarily to inform the mind and to assist those who needed help in living the Christian life or in answering questions regarding their faith and practice which must have been put to them by those around them. Others were intended for groups outside the Societies which Wesley was also anxious to reach with the message of salvation by sowing seeds which in time would bear fruit. His Advice to a Soldier, A Word to a Protestant, A Word to a Freeholder, A Word to a Smuggler, A Word to a Drunkard, A Word to an Unhappy Woman, and A Word of Advice to Saints and Sinners, were of this order.

In each of these Tracts he endeavored to make clear, usually by question and answer method, some point regarding the Christian life, and to encourage the reader to walk therein.

In The Character of a Methodist he made clear the origin of the name Methodist, the distinguishing marks of a Methodist, and what a Methodist is, does, speaks, and endeavors to be. In a Short Address to the Inhabitants of Ireland he asked and answered three simple questions: What are the Methodists? What do they teach? and What are the effects of their teaching? In A Word to a Drunkard he appealed to the reason of the individual by pointing out that through drink man throws away reason and understanding which make him different from the beasts of the fields, making him a devil and stirring up "devilish tempers" which were in him.

Some of the Tracts had the appeal of novelty in them. An Answer to all Which the Rev. Dr. Gill Has Printed on the Final Perseverance of the Saints took the form of poetry. It was made up of thirty-seven stanzas of eight lines each. His Serious Thoughts on the Earthquake at Lisbon came forth at a time when that subject was on the lips of everyone. He addressed it to the "great, the learned, rich and honorable heathens commonly called Christians" and attempted to explain in spiritual terms why this calamity of nature had come upon the people. Some Tracts had a personal appeal which made them well nigh irresistible. What smuggler could resist reading A Word to a Smuggler, or sabbath breaker, A Word to a Sabbath Breaker, or soldier, Advice to a Soldier? What woman, happy or unhappy, could resist reading A Word to an Unhappy Woman? What drunkard, gemtleman, Protestant or freeholder, saint or sinner, could resist reading a tract thrust into his hands in a carriage, inn, or at a sporting event when it was addressed to him personally? The fact that from 50,000 to 100,000 of some of these tracts were printed and distributed

is evidence of their appeal.[21]

From the standpoint of their literary contribution to the day and age many of these writings were of inconsequent value in comparison to some of the weightier works which came from the pen of John Wesley. They were instruments, however, used by Wesley and the Methodists to sow bits of understandable reading material among the masses of England and which he felt in due time would produce a harvest of righteousness.

9. Controversial Writings.

Another widespread use of the printed word by Wesley was that brought forth by direct attacks on him, the Methodists or some point of belief or practice in the public press of the day. When Lloyd's Evening Post carried an account of JUMPERS among the Methodists Wesley replied with a letter in which he explained such actions on the part of a few misguided Methodists as instruments of Satan to discredit the works of God.[22] The newspaper accounts of the Methodist ordination controversy called forth replies from him and Popery Calmly Considered came forth from him in answer to an anonymous publication entitled Methodism and Popery Dissected and Compared; and the Doctrines of Both Proved to Be Derived From a Papal Origin. In this publication Wesley methodically examined the Church of Rome to point out what he held to be the fallacies in its doctrines "with all the plainness and calmness" possible.

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21. Cf. Tyerman, op. cit. 3:236.

22. Cf. Journal, 5:28.

Over against this defensive technique Wesley also took up the pen to wage war in an offensive way to state the Methodist views in controversies of the day. This was the case with his so-called larger Tracts such as the article of thirty pages on Christian Perfection when that subject was being very widely discussed. The Lord Our Righteousness was a rebuke of the prevailing views of the imputed righteousness of Christ. His Sermon on Free Grace, which he published along with Charles Wesley's hymn on Universal Redemption, Predestination Calmly Considered and What is an Arminian? all came forth when the doctrines of Calvin were being widely considered. When the Moravians advertized in the press for "queries" concerning their faith and practices, Wesley answered with his Querries Humbly Proposed to the Right Reverend and Right Honorable Count Zizendorf in which he summed up what he felt was wrong in the beliefs and practices of the Moravians. His 522 page Doctrine of Original Sin, which Tyerman feels was one of the best refutations of that doctrine in the English language, was written in answer to a publication by a Dr. Taylor who set forth this doctrine from the Socinian point of view. [23]

His An Earnest Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion and his Farther Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion were efforts to make clear and understandable to men who were steeped in the tenets and processes of a rationalistic age the message of

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23. Cf. Tyerman, op. cit. 2:294.

salvation which was so dear to his heart and which exuded from every page. Thus in a day when reason was a tool used to explain away religion of the heart, Wesley began with a definition of reason and then proceeded step by step to reveal the relationship which exists between reason and religion. His technique here may be clearly seen in the following statement:

> What do you mean by reason? I suppose you mean the eternal reason, or the nature of things; the nature of God, and the nature of man, with the relations necessarily subsisting between them. Why, this is the very religion we preach; a religion evidently founded on, and every way agreeable to, eternal reason, to the essential nature of things. Its foundation stands on the nature of God and the nature of man, together with their mutual relations. And it is in every way suitable thereto; to the nature of God; for it begins in knowing him: And where, but in the true knowledge of God, can you conceive true religion to begin? It goes on in loving him and all mankind; for you cannot but imitate whom you love. It ends in serving him; in doing his will; in obeying him whom we know and love. [24]

In these two publications Wesley set forth his declaration of faith which was surely believed and practiced by the people called Methodists and which he felt was entirely agreeable to both reason and the Scriptures. [25] It was here also that he laid bare the sins of men, [26] but he did not stop there. He made plain the way of salvation as well. He pointed out how God works in the soul, how men find true happiness and he even suggested a prayer addressed to the "being of beings" which men of reason might use in their journey toward the place where they could ask to be formed after the image of God, to love God and to be happy

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24. Works, 8:12.

25. Cf. Ibid., 8:46.

26. Cf. Ibid., 8:136ff.

in Him throughout eternity.[27]

Of course, these publications caused comment and especially among his enemies, but Wesley was surprised that they did not cause a greater stir. And he was much more surprised when he realized how much good these works did in setting forth his beliefs and practices for those who were outside the Methodist circle. Of his Farther Appeal, he wrote in 1746 ". . .it seems nothing ever was published which softened them so much." [28]

10. The Arminian Magazine

This magazine which appeared both monthly and in bound yearly volumes provided for the people in the way of a professional religious journal what Wesley had done for them in a personal way in his Journal, sermons, tracts and other smaller writings. It first appeared in 1778 to refute Calvinistically indoctrinated material being published by two other magazines of the day. In it Wesley proposed to set forth the universality of God's love by "arguments and illustrations drawn, partly from Scripture, partly from reason, proposed in as inoffensive a manner as the nature of the thing will permit." [29]

Each issue of the publication was made up of sermons, his own and those of others, letters, poems, biographies, pictures, anecdotes, miscellaneous articles and thoughts on

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27. Cf. Ibid., 8:199ff.

28. Journal, 3:232.

29. Works, 14:293.

various aspects of the Christian life and work. Each item was selected with care and to read of one of these volumes is to be convinced that it was serious business with him. His sermons, for instance, were usually newly written ones, but on the old themes. The emphasis on doctrine and Christlike character were everywhere evident in them. And if the magazine had done no more than to call forth sermons like these it would have rendered "incalculable service to the cause of Christ." [30]

While the Arminian Magazine was in the strict sense a religious magazine, in bound form it was actually one of the many collections of works which poured from the press of Wesley. For a number of years prior to the appearance of the Magazine he had been revising and publishing in bound volumes many of the smaller works which had appeared in other forms. It was in the 1771 edition of these collected works which Wesley experimented with the use of an asterisk in the margins of the pages to point out significant passages to his readers. This practice was not continued in later editions but it indicates his concern that the people get the right meaning from what they read and in the quickest time possible. [31]

In 1777 another so-called collection appeared. It was A Survey of the Wisdom of God in the Creation; or a Compendium

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30. Cf. Tyerman, op. cit., 3:338.

31. Cf. Ibid., 3:112.

of Natural Philosophy. It was largely a compilation of the works of others in this field but knowing Wesley as we do we know that what it contained was in agreement with his point of view or it would not have been given to the people. Here once again he was making use of the work of others to say to his people what he himself would have said to them. It was his endeavor to give them a Compendium of Philosophy which he felt contained the best thought of man concerning man and the world around him.

A study of Wesley's use of the printed word in spreading the message of salvation by faith reveals in an unmistakable way that here was no so-called fly by night evangelist who preached stirring sermons, distributed a few tracts and then moved on to new fields of endeavor. Here, rather, was a man who made use of every possible means to win the allegiance of the people for Christ, but who instead of leaving them to sink or swim after he had gone, provided for them a great collection of content material, which served to guide them

> . . .as they broke from the bondage and futility of an irreligious life and entered on a course of purposeful cultivation of holiness. [32]

Wesley's use of the printed word in this respect gave a foundation to his evangelistic endeavors which is without equal in the whole field of evangelistic leaders. It was through his untiring efforts that the people had at their command a vast storehouse of spiritual knowledge, a large part of which many of them had committed to memory to be used over and over again.

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32. McNeill, John T., op. cit., p. 182.

It has been said that revivals have always filled the schools, but in a day when there were few schools to fill he gave the people through the printed word the means of instructing themselves in one of the outstanding efforts of all times to lift up the masses of the people both spiritually and intellectually.

CHAPTER VI

WESLEY'S ORGANIZATION

1. Wesley's Genius

a. The Lack of an Overall Plan

Much has been written to point out the fact that from the beginning the organization used by John Wesley in fostering the Evangelical Revival had had no definite plan. Wesley admitted this fact in his Plain Account of the People Called Methodists. He had not the slightest idea at first of anything like that which later came into being, but the instruments he made use of in his organization came into being in answer to some pressing need with which they were confronted at the time. Sometimes the answer came quite unexpectedly, but at other times it came from following common sense and the Scripture, and while his organization thus developed as it was needed he nevertheless felt that it was in conformity with the Scripture and in keeping with God's providential guidance.[1]

Wesley was not necessarily an originator, but he was possessed of that rare gift of making good use of the tools created by others. He had an uncanny gift of utilizing the experience of the past, borrowing from his contemporaries and assimilating what he had in such a way that it could be used to meet

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1. Cf. Letters, 2:292.

a particular situation with which he was confronted. This becomes evident when one looks at the use he made of the Societies, lay leaders and workers, chapels, hymns, sermons, tracts and other miscellaneous writings which he considered worthwhile. As Rattenbury pointed out, he did with other men's ideas what Shakespeare did with other men's plots and with Holenshed's Chronicles: he made them live. His genius was not in creating something new, but taking the material at hand and making it live. [2]

Piette feels that his organization was the means whereby the movement not only survived but became ever larger. [3] Townsend was correct when he noted that it was the means of conserving, by directing into ordered channels of usefulness, the spiritual momentum set in motion by the sermons and the hymns of the flaming evangelists. It was the means of following up every blow made for God in training and developing new converts. [4] Wesley was aware that his organization was a series of "spiritual helps." [5] Preaching alone, without joining the converts together into groups for spiritual training was only "begetting children for the murderer," he wrote August 25,1763. [6]

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2. Cf. Rattenbury, op. cit., p. 101.
3. Cf. Piette, op. cit., p. 453.
4. Cf. Townsend, op. cit., 1:280.
5. Works, 7:207ff.
6. Journal, 5:26.

The fact that he borrowed tools that had been used by the first Christians and by the Moravians of his day does not affect the picture in any way. He preached, people believed and were converted in ever increasing numbers, but they soon became aware that while they were "children of God" they had much to learn about the living of the Christian life. Wesley was aware that they were "raw, undisciplined soldiers" and without further instruction they would return to the old way of life again. [7]

2. The Societies

a. Origin

The Societies came into being when some of these people came to Wesley asking that he give them instructions in living the Christian life. At first he encouraged them to strengthen each other, to talk together and to pray with each other and for each other, but they insisted that he talk with them "to direct and quicken us in our way, to give us advices which you will know we need, and to pray with us as well as for us." [8]

Wesley could not refuse such a request and he planned to visit them individually to instruct them in the way. When he found their number quite large, however, he set aside Thursday evenings to spend with them for prayer and exhortation so that they might assist each other in working out their own salvation and watch over one another

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7. Cf. Letters, 2:142.

8. Ibid., 2:294.

The Societies afforded him the means, therefore, not only of assisting each person to grow and develop spiritually, but of enabling him in turn to assist others in working out their salvation.[9] While building up "the flock of Christ in faith and love" he made it possible for the members to "provoke one another to love and good works," and to keep the spiritual fires glowing[10] through the warmth, fellowship and care of others who had shared similar experiences.[11]

Wesley was aware of the power of association whether for good or evil. He knew that "friendship with the world" caused enmity with God and through the Societies, he helped create an atmosphere where his people could make full use of spiritual values and ideals in the actual sharing of experiences with others.[12] From his own experiences in the Holy Club, while enroute to America with the Moravians and with the Moravians in Germany, Wesley had learned the value of reinforcing one's religious experience by relating it to others of like mind and heart. The approval of others helped stamp it deeper into one's consciousness.

The Societies also offered him and his leaders the opportunity of repeatedly reminding a lost and forgotten people of eighteenth century England that somebody cared about them, how they lived, suffered, and whether they were lost or saved.

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9. Cf. Works, 6:150.
10. Cf. Works, 7:278.
11. Cf. Ibid., 7:213.
12. Cf. Works, 6:333.

This strange new doctrine at first amazed them, but one after another found that what Wesley preached and taught could become reality and bring about changes in their lives. As this change came about, Wesley invited them to become co-workers with him and with God in helping others. Thus Wesley encouraged people who had never had such an opportunity before to participate in the work to the utmost of their ability under simple rules which were set forth to assist but not to hinder them. He encouraged them to express their faith by their works, to refrain from evil, to attend the "ordinances" of God and to do good to all men. He expected them to attend the Band and Class meetings and to participate in the activities of the group. As they developed they were given places of leadership according to their abilities.

He took them as they were, gave them visions of a new life, encouraged them to seek it for themselves by following simple rules and directions and sent them forth to teach and to help others. In the Societies, they met to pray, sing, study the Scriptures together, reprove, to encourage and exhort one another to godly living, for Wesley was aware that religion was a social and not a solitary thing. It was a way of life which could be best learned in a fellowship with others where their thoughts, feelings, purposes and ideals could be nourished and stimulated to greater growth. In these Societies Wesley sought to control the conditions under which his "learners" lived so that desirable qualities could be encouraged and undesirable ones discouraged.

b. Membership

Membership in the Societies was extended to all those who had "a desire to flee from the wrath to come, to be saved from their sins," but this desire was to be evidenced by a resolve to avoid all known sin, doing all the good possible and attending the ordinances of God. [13]

The candidate was placed in a Class where he was given a copy of the Rules at the first meeting. Here he spent about an hour each week for two months and then he was admitted into the Society on the recommendation of the Class Leader and after examination by Mr. Wesley. [14] A person remained a member of the Society so long as he "continues to meet his brethren and walks according to his profession." [15] This requirement Wesley felt was simple, rational, and founded upon common sense in applying the general rules of Scripture. Faced with the difficulty of supervising an ever-enlarging movement, Wesley constantly insisted on an absolute obedience to the rules. Early in the movement he found that examining the members individually was more than he could do oftener than once a quarter, but he set aside certain hours each day to examine the people by the rules which were known to all. [16] The seriousness with which he did this work and his insistence upon obedience can be seen in the fact that at Kingswood on February 28, 1741, he expelled a group

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13. Cf. Letters, 2:294.
14. Cf. Works, 8:307.
15. Works, 7:209.
16. Cf. Journal, 4:418.

for "scoffing at the Word and ministers of God, for their tale-bearing, backbiting, and evil speaking, for their dissembling, lying and slandering." [17]

Carelessness in one's Christian duty, being absent from meetings, unchristian tempers and practices, stealing, dealing in untaxed goods, and laziness were causes of immediate expulsion by John Wesley. His idea of what a Christian should be was so exact and so well known that he did not hesitate to exclude all who did not live up to the standards. "If any man have not the spirit of Christ he is none of his."[18] In the light of this, one was a Christian or one was not.

> . . .I disclaim all common swearers, Sabbath-breakers, drunkards; all whoremongers, liars, cheats, extortioners; in a word, all that live in open sin. . .They are no Christians at all. Give them their own name: they are open heathens. They are the curse of the nation, the bane of society, the shame of mankind, the scum of the earth.[19]

So thoroughly did he evaluate the worth of each member of the Societies that he challenged others to find one who was not worthy after he had examined their characters.[20] He insisted that it was impossible for one to retain a "clear conviction of the love of God" without walking closely with God.[21] When one had lost this, it was noticeable in his

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17. Journal, 2:430.
18. Works, 5:209.
19. Letters, 3:10.
20. Cf. Journal, 5:98.
21. Cf. Letters, 3:174.

conduct even if he were not conscious of it. He insisted that he rejected no man for his opinions, but for sin, for "unchristian temper and unchristian practices; for being haters of reproof, haters of peace, haters of their brethren, and consequently haters of God." [22]

To any member Wesley found "growing in grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus" he gave a ticket which served as a means of recognition and acceptance. Tickets were withheld from those whom he found unworthy.

These tickets contained the name of the owner and the date of issue. They also contained scripture verses and pictures of some aspect of the gospel. The one issued to Mary Davis in 1757, for example, had a picture of a crown resting above the pages of an open Bible, across which was written, "blessed is the man. . .endureth temptation." Another had the picture of the Lord with a crown in one hand and a staff in the other. The one issued to Josiah Domford in May, 1750, had the words, "If you love me, keep my commandments," and the scripture reference "John xiv:15." Another, "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit down with me on my Throne, even as I also overcame and am set down with my Father in his throne." Another had the words "Be perfect" and the scripture reference "2 Cor. xiii:11." [23]

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22. Journal, 4:64ff.

23. Cf. Journal, 7:61.

Each ticket bore the name of the person to whom it was issued with the words "I believe the bearer hereof to be one that fears God and works righteousness." [24] Each bore John Wesley's signature.

3. The Bands

a. Origin

In the early days the Societies were made up of indiscriminate groupings but this proved awkward and unsatisfactory when an effort was made to carry out Wesley's suggestion to "confess your faults one to another and pray one for another, that ye may be healed." [25] Thus in compliance with the request of the members Wesley divided them into Bands in which married women and single women met together and single and married men met together; thus affording all groups a means of closer union.

In the beginning Wesley met the Bands weekly to give them "instructions and exhortations" as he felt to be most needful for them, to pray with them and to lead them in thanksgiving to God for His blessings. [26] He soon found this to be impossible, so in December, 1738, to make it possible for others to help them also, he drew up the Rules for the Bands.

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24. Letters, 2:300.
25. Ibid., 2:301.
26. Cf. Ibid., 2:302.

> In order to 'confess our faults one to another' and pray one for another that we may be healed, we intend (1) To meet once a week at the least. (2) To come punctually at the hour appointed. (3) To begin with singing or prayer. (4) To speak each of us in order, freely and plainly, the true state of our soul, with the faults we have committed in thought, word, or deed, and the temptations we have felt since our last meeting. (5) To desire some person among us. . .to speak his own state first, and then to ask the rest, in order, as many and as searching questions as may be, concerning their state, sins, and temptations. [27]

Each Band was made up of not fewer than five and not more than ten like minded individuals who desired to grow in grace, and to encourage one another in faith. The meetings were simple, consisting of prayers, hymns, pious readings, exhortations, and beginning with the leader a public acknowledgment of sin, an accounting for temptations encountered and how they were met with since their last meeting.

The Rules also contained a list of the questions which were to be used in examining those who desired membership and they reveal the care used by Wesley in his endeavor to keep out all persons unworthy. Before they could be admitted they were to give assurance that they not only had forgiveness of sin, and peace with God, but that they had the witness of the Spirit, the love of God shed abroad in their hearts, that no sin had dominion over them, that they desired to be told of their faults and whatever the members have in their hearts concerning them and that they desired to be perfectly frank and entirely open at all times.[28]

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27. Ibid., 2:301ff.

28. Cf. Works, 8:272ff.

After being on trial for one month, (later extended to three months), they were admitted into the Band by a vote of the group.[29] They were examined once each quarter by Mr. Wesley himself, and tickets were issued to all those whom he found worthy.

These Bands were destined to become the "seed beds" in which the personality of the individual could find conditions suitable for growth and development in the confession of wrongs and mistakes and the sharing of experiences in overcoming their weaknesses. Coming from similar background and with similar problems, they sought the advice and help of those whom they could trust in solving these problems.

In the Plain Account of the People Called Methodists, Wesley evaluated the good done by the Bands in these words:

> Great and many are the advantages which have ever since flowed from this closer union of the believers with each other. They prayed for one another, that they might be healed of the faults they had confessed; and it was so. The chains were broken, the bonds burst in sunder, and sin had no more dominion over them. Many were delivered from the temptations out of which till then they found no way to escape. They were built up in our most holy faith. They rejoiced in the Lord more abundantly. They were strengthened in love, and more effectually provoked to abound in every good work.[30]

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29. Cf. Journal, 2:211.

30. Letters, 2:302.

b. Remedial Instruction

Some members of the Bands did not grow spiritually under this program, however, and they "fell from the faith" due to their "falling into known, wilful sin," "sins of omission," "yielding to heart-sins," and "not watching unto prayer," thus making of no effect the exhortations and prayers of the others.[31]

Some of these who were failing requested that Mr. Wesley give them instructions suitable to their particular needs. So he put them into separate Bands to meet with him at which time he suited the hymns, exhortations and prayers to the needs of those "who did see God, but have now lost sight of the light of His countenance, and who mourn after Him and refuse to be comforted till they know He has healed their backsliding." It was to them that he "applied" both "the threats and promises of God" and many of them not only regained their former state, but ever went further in that they were "more watchful than ever, more meek and lowly, as well as stronger in the faith that worketh by love." Some were now better Christians than their former brethren.[32]

The success of this venture gave rise to the formation of "Select Bands" made up of those individuals who had advanced further than the average member spiritually. They were organized so that Wesley could give them directions and encouragement in keeping with their needs. At the same time they served as groups to which he could unbosom himself on occasions without reserve. These groups were a sort of graduate seminar, the

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31. Cf. Ibid., 2:303.
32. Cf. Ibid., 2:303.

members of which he could hold up to the others as a pattern of love, of holiness, and of good works. He met with them on Monday morning

> . . .to direct them how to press after perfection, to exercise their every grace and improve every talent they had received, and to incite them to love one another more, and to watch more carefully over each other. [33]

He felt it unnecessary to provide rules for their behavior except that their meetings to be held in strict secrecy, that every member yield to the minister in all "indifferent things," and that each member make a contribution to the "common stock" each week.

At their meetings all members were on equal standing and freedom of speech prevailed. Wesley himself found value in this free conversation, testimony and prayers of these "righteous" members for he, like every other minister and teacher, must have known seasons where he longed for the meeting and sharing of minds and hearts with those of like minds and hearts.

However noble this experiment was on the part of Wesley the Select Bands were destined to disappear. Piette reminds us that their doom was forseen when some of these 'self styled saints who yet tarried in this earthly life' left off the most elementary duties of the Christian life, spent their time in performing miracles and announcing the imminent coming of the end of the world. [34]

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33. Ibid., 2:304.

34. Cf. Piette, op. cit., p.462.

Even though they were discontinued the experiment itself was one worthy of note. The fact that Wesley saw no need to draw up rules for their conduct is indicative that he considered rules as means to an end and not as ends in themselves. Here it is evident that he was willing to forego rules where there was an indication that they were not at all necessary. It should also be pointed out here that the members of the group were all on equal standing as over against the learner and leader arrangement of the other groups. This is indicative of Wesley's willingness to grant freedom of thought and action as his people became capable of accepting it. It is regrettable that actions and pronouncements of some of these "advanced students" caused him embarrassment and the discontinuance of the idea within Methodist circles.

4. The Classes

a. Origin and Purpose

The Societies were divided into Classes in 1742 when Captain Foy suggested that a way of raising money to pay for the Room at the Horse Fair in Bristol would be to assign eleven members to a leader who, in turn, would collect a penny a week from each of them. Wesley saw in the suggestion not only a way of paying off the debt, but a means of keeping watch over the spiritual welfare of the ever increasing numbers of his people.

Thus it followed that each Society was divided into Classes along geographical lines with from five to twelve members each. A leader selected by Mr. Wesley was placed over each group to

assist each member in any way possible and to make regular reports to him.[35] The leader called on the members in the beginning but when this proved difficult they began meeting together where a full inquiry was made into the behavior of each member, advice or reproof was given where needed, quarrels and misunderstandings settled and after an hour or two spent in this "labour of love" they were concluded with prayer and thanksgiving.

The Class Meeting under Wesley's leadership became an adult school for spiritual living. In the preaching services the people caught a vision of the Christian life and in the Class, under trusted leaders, they found the opportunity of exploring these visions and making them meaningful. It was a means of welding people together from widely separated areas of life and residence into homogeneus groups. It was here that they met together with a common goal to discuss, explore and evaluate every aspect of their lives. In sharing experiences they found that they had much in common with others, thus affording a fellowship of believers which had not previously existed. Out of this fellowship there grew a regard for each other, and the means of a mutual sharing of burdens.[36]

Through the Classes Wesley provided the means whereby it was possible for the people to consider the problems involved in the situations which they were facing, to discover what was

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35. Cf. Journal, 2:528.

36. Cf. Letters, 2:297ff.

indeed the Christian solution to the problem, and to make plans for putting their decisions into practice in their individual lives. They afforded them the opportunity of interpreting the Christian message in terms of living experiences of their own day and to discover wider and deeper implications of these experiences. They were the means of helping growing people to develop those habits, skills, attitudes, knowledge, appreciations, and ideals which would enable them to live out integrated lives in the ongoing life of the community of which they were a part.

5. The Conferences

a. In Answer to Need

Wesley's Conferences with his preachers came into being for the purpose of "considering what might most conduce to the general good,"[37] or "that my fellow labourers and I may more effectually assist each other, to save our own souls and those that hear us." [38]

It was in answer to this felt need that he called them together and so effective a means of mutual assistance did they become that there were forty-seven of these Conferences during the lifetime of Mr. Wesley, and they are still an integral part of the Methodist system. From the original meeting with six preachers and four laymen present, the membership steadily increased until by 1790 there were at least one hundred and thirty members,[39] and these

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37. Works, 7:207.

38. Ibid., 7:278.

39. Cf. Doughty, William L., John Wesley, His Conferences and His Preachers, p. 16.

Conferences, while called to consider means of bettering their effectiveness, actually became a time of spiritual and mental renewal for Wesley's co-workers.

From the very beginning the Conference was opened with solemn prayer for the divine blessings of God upon their deliberations. In 1747 when the business at hand threatened their spiritual endeavors, rules were formulated whereby the Conferences could be more a time of "prayer, watching and self denial." [40]

Preaching had its place at every Conference. Sometimes it was done by the Wesleys, but at times others were invited to preach also. In 1754 there were sixteen preachers who delivered a total of thirty seven sermons. This preaching by the others afforded Wesley the means of seeing his preachers at work and of determining their ability as preachers. [41]

Singing was an integral part of every service. Besides being a topic on the agenda at many of the Conferences, singing always had its place in the meetings of these consecrated preachers.

Doughty has suggested that when Charles Wesley's "Hymns and Sacred Poems" were published in 1749 he must have had the meeting of the preachers in mind because it is not hard to believe that the following words were written for them.

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40. Cf. Bennett, John, The Minutes of the Conferences, p. 39.
41. Cf. Doughty, op. cit., p. 23.

What mighty troubles hast Thou shown
Thy feeble tempted followers here;
We have through fire and water gone,
But saw Thee on the floods appear
But felt Thee present in the flame,
And shouted our Deliverer's name. [42]

And while they were in session they could sing

Jesu, we look to Thee
Thy promised presence claim;
Thou in the midst of us shalt be
Assembled in Thy name. [43]

or

And are we yet alive
And see each others face?
Glory, and praise to Jesus give
For His Almighty grace!

Preserved by power Divine
To full salvation here,
Again in Jesu's praise we join
And in His sight appear.

What troubles have we seen
What conflicts have we passed,
Fightings without and fears within
Since we assembled last.

But out of all the Lord
Hath brought us by His love;
And still He doth His help afford
And hides our love above. [44]

On departing they could sing

And let our bodies part
To different climes repair;
Inseparably joined in heart
The friends of Jesus are.

O Let us still proceed
In Jesu's work below;
And, following our triumphant Head
To farther conquests go.
The vineyard of their Lord
Before His labourers lies;
And, lo! we see the vast reward
Which waits us in the skies. [45]

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42. Ibid., p. 70.
43. Ibid.
44. Ibid.
45. Ibid., p. 72.

Preaching and singing were not the only means of creating fellowship and uniting this group of spiritual warriors. To further the advancement of a spirit of fellowship among the preachers at the Conference of 1748, it was decided that all should not only recognize the want of such fellowship, but that they should pray and work to bring it about. They were encouraged to have confidence in each other, always ready to believe only the best about any other, to defend the character of the others to the extent of their ability and be ready to put others first at all times. 46

And fellowship was fostered in another way. The Methodist people came to look forward to the trips of the preachers to and from the Conferences because it was in their homes that they were entertained while enroute. In this way old friendships were renewed and spiritual fires were rekindled in the uniting of preachers and former congregations for these brief visits. These visits paved the way for the extension of a Christian fellowship across the land.

At the Conferences the preachers came into close fellowship with the Wesleys as well as other preachers. In this association of preachers of various ages, experiences, and abilities, there was a sharing of ideas and ideals that always takes place with people brought together by common

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46. Cf. Ibid., p. 66.

interests and purposes. There is no record of the conversation of preacher with preacher, or preacher with the Wesleys, but to share a conversion experience with John Wesley or to discuss the words and music of a hymn with Charles Wesley must have been an experience never to be forgotten in any preacher's life. The Conference was a time when all of the resources of experience could be pooled in an endeavor to find the best answer to the problems which faced them, and as such it became

> . . .the symbol of their unity; the grand climax of their year; an incentive to more intense missionary enterprise and the fount of inspiration for a deeper consecration. [47]

In the early Conferences a large place was given to the discussion and evaluation of the basic doctrines and beliefs of the Methodists. This continued until 1747 when there seems to have been a general agreement in this area and more and more emphasis was placed on the preachers themselves. Under Wesley's direction they examined in detail their own effectiveness, character, training, rules, habits, health, salary for themselves and allowances for their wives and children, their horses, their brethren in America, the education of their children, the authority of Mr. Wesley, and conference membership.

> In all their deliberations they had a common purpose;
>
> It is desired that all things may be considered as in the immediate presence of God; That we may meet with a single eye, and as little children who have everything to learn; That every point may be examined from the foundation: That every person may speak freely whatever is in his heart; and that every question proposed may be fully debated and bolted to the bran. (sifted thoroughly).[48]

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47. Ibid., p. 27.

48. Bennett, op. cit., p. 7.

In keeping with this purpose, all of his preachers were free to engage in the discussions, most of which took the form of questions and answers. Mr. Wesley sometimes directed a series of questions at some one individual by name to make the meaning of some point clear. [49]

It was the rule that in matters of a speculative nature each was to agree with the others only so far as his judgment was convinced by what had gone before, and in matters of a practical nature Wesley urged them to let their consciences be their guide. [50]

With this kind of participation the Conferences came to be for the preachers what the Class meetings were for the members of the Societies. The Conferences afforded them the means of reviewing and bringing together under one head the various aspects of their doctrines, rules, methods, and purposes. In doing so, learning situations were created where the Methodist heritage could become the personal experience of every person present.

The first Minutes of the Conferences appeared in 1749 when Mr. Wesley published a thirty page booklet containing a study of Methodist doctrine and another of thirty-two pages dealing with the discipline and methods of work. While they did not contain a record of all that went on at those Conferences,(for Wesley edited them as he saw fit), they were valuable for what

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49. Cf. Works, 8:287.

50. Cf. Bennett, op. cit., p. 7.

they contained. [51]

In the year 1789 Wesley published "The Minutes of Several Conversations Between the Reverend Mr. Wesley and Others From the Year 1744 to the Year 1789" in tract form, called the Larger Minutes. This publication contained the heart of what had taken place at these Conferences and was destined to become a handbook for Methodism. Here were to be found the doctrines, rules, the methods of procedure set forth in simple question and answer form. Here was to be found a brief summary of what Mr. Wesley had written in hundreds of other works and had been taught by him for years. Here all these were brought together under one head in a brief, understandable form.

b. Wesley's Authority in the Conference

During his lifetime Mr. Wesley was the supreme authority of his Conferences to which he invited the others to advise with him, but not to rule him. Within this area of authority,however, there was room for his preachers to make full use of their mental and spiritual powers in helping to solve their problems at hand. Theirs was the relationship of pupil-teacher, and any authority he exercised was for the good of the cause. [52]

This authority was gradually turned over to the preachers, however. In 1760 when Wesley was delayed by storms, the preachers had to wait for him a week, but by 1783 when he was ill, part of the Conference business was carried on without him.

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51. Cf. Ibid., p. 5.

52. Cf. Works, 8:312.

In 1784 the Deed of Declaration came into being where one hundred preachers were vested with an ever increasing authority until his death, when they would direct the works in his place.[53] In 1790 Mr. Wesley, being too feeble to conduct the business of the Conference, a Mr. Mather acted as his assistant and conducted it for him, with Mr. Wesley looking on.[54]

The same thing is evidenced in his appointment of preachers. At first, he assumed sole responsibility in appointing the preachers because there was no other who knew either the circuits or the men well enough to be able to make wise appointments. As the years progressed Wesley still made the appointments but more and more he allowed himself to be influenced by others. Joseph Sutcliffe, writing of the Conference of 1790, revealed that Mr. Wesley came to the Conference with a list of appointments prepared, but that changes were made in them as the Conference progressed. These were made because of the "prayers" of the people and for personal family reasons. In a letter to George Merryweather (7 August 1770) Wesley revealed that the preachers themselves had some part at least in their appointments.[55]

Thus, while he never officially relinquished his authority over the Conferences, it can be seen that he did come to recognize the abilities and wishes of his people more and more in making use of the authority that was his.

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53. Cf. Doughty, op. cit.,p. 40.

54. Cf. Ibid., p.22ff.

55. Cf. Ibid., p.40ff.

CHAPTER VII

THE SELECTION AND TRAINING OF LEADERS

1. Wesley's Use of Lay Preachers

a. Qualifications

It was Wesley's mother who pointed out to him that it was possible for a layman to have received the call of God to preach the gospel. It was her restraining hand that prevented John from putting a stop to this "irregularity" once and for all when Thomas Maxfield began preaching. She advised him to examine the fruits of his preaching and to hear him himself before making a decision. Wesley followed his mother's advice, and lay preachers became an established part of the work.

By the conference of 1746, Wesley had formulated a series of questions by which it could be determined whether or not a man was "moved by the Holy Ghost and called of God to preach."

> 1) Do they know God as a pardoning God? Have they the love of God abiding in them? Do they desire and seek nothing but God? And are they holy in all manner of conversation? 2) Have they gifts (as well as grace) for the work? Have they (in some tolerable degree) a clear, sound understanding? Have they a right judgment in the things of God? Have they a just conception of salvation by faith? And has God given them any degree of utterance? Do they speak justly, readily, clearly? 3) Have they fruit? Are any truly convinced of sin, and converted to God, by their preaching? [1]

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1. Works, 8:324.

As long as these three "marks" undeniably occurred in any preacher it was felt that he was called to preach, but to be sure that the candidates had these qualifications, it was agreed that Wesley and at least one of the assistants were to hear each man preach, question him on the points stated above, question those converted by his preaching, secure a written account of the reasons he himself felt called to preach, and the congregation was to be asked to fast and pray that these factors might be considered rightly.

Curnock has pointed out that Wesley had the ability of enlisting the services of men of even one talent and encouraging the use of that one talent for the greatest good. On one occasion Wesley described "Billy Brammah" as a man of one talent, "that of directing sinners to Christ - now." [2]

Wesley had the ability to see beyond the weakness of the person working for God and to see the work wrought by that person in God's name. [3] He felt it far better to have even a few men who "are alive to God, sound in the faith, and of one heart with us and with one another, than fifty of whom we have no such assurance." [4] He took his preachers for what they were, recognized their limitations and set up means of discipline and training where they could effectively do the work set forth for them. He looked on them as his helpers and not as trained

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2. Journal, 6:153.
3. Cf. Journal, 5:97.
4. Letters, 3:74.

spiritual leaders. He made it possible for each man to make an ever increasing contribution to the work of saving souls.

He realized better than anyone else that they were not versed in much of the knowledge which is both necessary and expedient to the use of the minister, but he refused to admit that God could not use these unlearned men in spite of their shortcomings. He insisted that while they lacked much they were not deficient in the one thing they professed to know - a "substantial, practical, experimental divinity." [5] And that in spite of their deficiency, they were far better prepared as "guides of souls" than "a cursing, swearing, drinking clergyman who knows much of language and philosophy." [6]

Wesley felt that certain "gifts" were essential for the work of the minister. He insisted that a good understanding, a clear apprehension, and a sound judgment were essential to him if he was to understand the needs and problems of his people. [7] He must have the ability to meet situations as they arose with a liveliness and readiness of thought and a good memory that he could retain what he had learned. [8] Wesley was not in sympathy with the idea that those who were unfitted for other professions were suitable for the ministry. [9]

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5. Works, 8:221.
6. Works, 14:364.
7. Cf. Works, 10:481.
8. Cf. Ibid., 10:482.
9. Cf. Works, 10:490.

And there was a certain knowledge without which no man could be effective; a knowledge and understanding of his office, a thorough knowledge of the scriptures, a knowledge of "profane history," the sciences, the "fathers", and a knowledge of the world or a gift of common sense to understand what is going on about him. [10]

He realized that this was a large order, but he was aware that any man who felt his lack in any of these areas could ask for it from "Him who teacheth men knowledge." To ask God for these things with faith to believe that He is both willing and able to give them, he felt, was the privilege of the child of God. [11]

Wesley did not stop with intellectual endowments, however. He was concerned with the minister's motives and his affections as well. He insisted that the only worthy reason for one ever becoming a minister was "wholly and solely to glorify God, and to save souls." The desire for money, honor, preferment, or a comfortable living were to make one unworthy of the ministry. And because of his very special relationship between man and God, he was duty bound to love God with his whole soul and strength and his neighbor as himself. This love was to be the controlling factor in his life, his supreme happiness. It was to animate all passions and tempers and to regulate all powers and faculties. [12]

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10. Cf. Ibid., 10:482ff.

11. Cf. Ibid., 10:486ff.

12. Cf. Ibid., 10:494ff.

Thus while a faith in God, a love for God and man, a burning zeal for the advancement of His kingdom, with a heart devoted to God, came first with him, nevertheless no preacher was allowed to preach in any Wesley chapel who did not have more knowledge of the holy scriptures, more knowledge of himself, of God and the things of God than "nine in ten" of the clergymen of the day "either at the university or elsewhere." [13]

To help meet the need for preachers who could come up to this standard Wesley set in motion his program for in-service training whereby they could learn to become Christian preachers while trying to teach others to be Christians.

b. Training and Supervision

Just as Wesley turned to the open fields to preach to the people when he found an ever increasing number of churches closed to him, just so did he endeavor to train lay preachers to help him in the work. As he did with every other aspect of his work, Wesley took the means that were at hand and did not stop until he had refined them into instruments worthy of the Master's use.

There were no schools to which he could send his men for training and there was no time nor money to send them even if there had been. There was not even a possibility of taking them apart to train them himself before sending them out. So he did

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13. Works, 7:179.

the only thing that he could do - he set up a program of training for them whereby they could learn by doing in the actual work of a lay preacher.

As it was noted above, the men who were to help him were carefully screened by Wesley himself. None but those of outstanding gifts and graces were to be used by him. He made sure that each man possessed a real and vital Christian experience, that he knew what he was going to preach from first hand experience.

With this background and with a desire to save souls, Wesley sent these men out on short assignments to exhort and to preach as the occasion afforded itself, but most of all to give a personal witness to their own religious experience and to encourage others to seek such an experience for themselves. They were not educated men, but they did know what they had been sent to preach and because they did speak with the authority of personal experience which could be experienced by all, their influence was tremendous.

Experience had taught Wesley that it was a good thing to move his preachers often so that they could make the greatest use of the talents they had and to increase their talents in actual practice. They were to "comfort, exhort and instruct those who were athirst for God or who walked in the light of His countenance," [14]

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14. Letters, 3:192.

but he did not consider them priests. They did not perform priestly functions of administering sacraments, et cetera.[15] Then, too, as one man followed another in the itinerant system he built on the work of the one who had gone before. It was a slow work, but nevertheless an effective way of turning the hearts of rough, crude men and women toward God. The fact that these preachers were carpenters, shoemakers, tailors, sailors, or soldiers, must have made a tremendous impression on others of their own groups. As they listened, they must have felt that one of their own profession understood them, knew what they needed, and knew what could help them. Thus, Wesley learned that he could train his workmen on the job.[16] As the movement grew and the men developed into efficient, capable preachers, the assignments were extended[17] somewhat, but the scarcity of workers and the very increasing demand for workers, kept the better trained ones traveling almost continually.[18]

This does not mean that Wesley's efforts stopped here. In fact, this was but the beginning of his in-service program of preacher training. Curnock points out that Wesley bestowed all the time he could spare from the press of other duties to the training of his preachers. "He made the itinerancy a peripatetic school of learning."[19] He assumed the responsibility

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15. Cf. Works, 7:273.
16. Cf. Letters, 3:184.
17. Cf. Works, 7:208.
18. Cf. Letters, 3:98.
19. Cf. Journal, 4:190n.

of constant supervision and direction of his preachers upon whom he looked as his pupils.

His first insistence was that they be Christians and practice all the means of grace necessary to keep open the channels of grace between them and God. Almost with the same degree of insistence he demanded that they be students. He encouraged the hearing, reading, study, and meditation of the great truths of the Bible, that they read good books, and put into practice what good books revealed to them. He wrote for them. He insisted that the larger societies maintain libraries for their use at various places and he gave them books.

He encouraged his preachers to spend at least five hours each day in reading the best books. [20] He insisted that no man could be a "deep preacher" or a thorough Christian without extensive reading. In 1749, he invited seventeen of his preachers to Kingswood during Lent where he read to them every day as he had done for his pupils at Oxford. To one group of them he read Bishop Pearson's "On the Creed," and to the other "Logic" by Aldrich. To both groups he read "Rules for Action and Utterance." [21]

Tyerman calls our attention to the fact that in 1746 Wesley wrote to a Dr. P. Doddridge the principal of an academy for the education of dissenting ministers, asking for a list of books he

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20. Cf. Works, 8:315.

21. Journal, 3:391.

could use in the training of his own men. Doddridge complied with the following: Logic - Carmichael, and Dr. Watts; Metaphysics - De Urce, Dr. Watts, and LeClerc. Ethics - Puffendorf and Hutcheson; Jewish Antiquities - Lewis, Reland, Calmet, and Prideaux; Civil History - Puffendorf, Turselme, and Lampe; Natural History - Rowning, Ray, Cotton Mather, and Derham; Astronomy - Watts, Jennings, and Wells; Natural and Revealed Religion - Carmichael, Synge, Clarke, Gibson, Doddridge, Jefferies, Bullock, Conybeare, Leland, and Chandler.

In the area of practical divinity he suggested, in addition to some worthy leaders of the Established Church, the following: Bolton, Hall, Reynolds, Sibbes, Ward, Jackson, Owen, Goodwin, Bates, Baxter, Wright, Evans, Flavel, Taylor, Howe, Henry, Boyce, Bennett, Jennings, Watts and Grosvenor. Of Commentators, he listed Beza, Erasmus, Castellio, Heinsius, Patrick, Lowth, Locke, Pierce, Benson, Ainsworth, Hammond, Grotius, Brennius, Wells, Calvin, Poole, LeClerc, and Cradock. As "illustrators" of the scripture, though not direct commentators, he listed Witsius, Saurin, Glassius, Gataker, Frankius, Knatchbull, Blackwall, Lightfoot, Calmet, Mede, Hallet, Edwards, Le Crene, Wolsius, Raphelius, Vitringa, Boss, Elsner, and Lardner. [22]

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22. Cf. Tyerman, op. cit., 1:517ff.

Prior to this in 1744 Wesley himself had suggested the following writers for his preachers: Sallust, Caesar, Tully, Castellio, Terence, Virgil, Horace, Vida, Buchanan, Greek Testament, Epictetus, Plato, Ignatius, Ephrem, Syrus, Homer, Greek Epigrams, Dupont, Bishop Usher's Sermons, Arndt, Boehm, Nalson, Pascal, Frank, R. Gell, and the Methodist tracts. [23]

And at the conference of 1745 it had been decided that libraries be maintained at London, Bristol, and Newcastle with the following works: 1) Practical and Doctrinal Divinity; the Bible, tracts, Sermons of Usher, Nalson and Boehm, Frank's Works, Pascals Thoughts, Beveridge's Thoughts, Pearson on the Creed and Fell on the Epistles. 2) Physics: Drake's Anatomy, Quincy's Dispensatory, Allen's Synopsis, Dr. Cheney's Works. 3) Natural Philosophy: Nature Delineated, Millars Gardener's Dictionary. 4) Astronomy: Whiston's Astronomic Principles. 5) History: Universal History. 6) Poetry: Spencer, John Davis, Milton, and "our" hymns and poetry. 7) Latin Prose and Verse: Sallust, Cornelius Nepos, Vell. Patera, Littleton's Dictionary, Tully, Philosophica and De Officiis, Cypriana Opera, Castellio's Dialogues, Erasmi Selecta, Austin's Confessions, Terence, Virgil, Selecta Horatij, Vida, Casimir, and Buchanan. 8) Greek Verse: Greek Testament, Hederici Lexicon, Plato's Select Dialogues, Zenophon's Cyropoedia, Epictetus, Antoninus, de se ipso, Ignatius, Ephraim Syrus, Marcarius, Chrysost de Sacerd, Homer's Iliad, Epigrammatum Delectus, Duport's Job. 9) Hebrew: the Bible and Burtorf. [24]

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23. Cf. Doughty, Op. Cit., p. 45ff.

24. Cf. Bennet, Op Cit., p. 28ff.

Whether the assistants themselves complained or whether Wesley himself was aware that this was a heavy assignment, at the 1746 Conference, a somewhat briefer list of readings was proposed for the preachers. This included: The Bible, The Life of God in the Soul of Man, a'Kempis, Pilgrim's Progress, Law's tracts, Beveridge's Private Thoughts, Heylin's Devotional Tracts, the Life of Halyburton and Monseiur de Renty, Bishop Pearson on the Creed, Bishop Fell on the Epistles, Sermons of Boehm and Nalson, Pascal's Thoughts, Milton's Paradise Lost, Cane and Fleury's Primitive Christianity, and Echard's Ecclesiastical History. [25]

Recognizing the value of writing himself, he encouraged his preachers to write. He urged them to keep diaries, which, of course, always puts one on his best mettle not only to do something worth recording, but to write it in a way that would be readable. This afforded his men a means of self evaluation and for Wesley it was a means of watching their growth and development.

They wrote sermons for him which he diligently and carefully revised, thus affording them a means of evaluating their sermons. And as Wesley did not hesitate to bestow praise or criticism when it was due, it enabled the preachers to work under a well ordered and kindly discipline which encouraged them to be at their best. Wesley insisted that his preachers write accounts of their own Christian experiences and send to him the accounts of any unusual conversion experiences which came

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25. Cf. Bennett, op. cit., p. 36.

to their attention. These accounts Wesley collected and printed from time to time as manifestations and illustrations of "divine truth" in the lives of the people. He encouraged his people to read them, thus making it possible for the experiences of the people to be tested by the corporate mind and experience of the group.[26]

Wesley thus knew his preachers and he stopped at nothing to help them. Where it was at all possible he set aside an hour in the morning to spend with them as he had done with his pupils at Oxford. "We endeavored not only to increase each other's knowledge, but 'to provoke one another to love and to good works' "[27]

He went out of his way to help them, especially those who used him ill.[28] He always hoped to overcome evil with good.[29] He watched over the spiritual life of his men with "Godly jealousy," lest they by not using their talents grow weaker rather than stronger in the faith.[30] He expected that his young and inexperienced preachers would make some "improper expressions" but he also had faith enough in them to believe that they would lay them aside with admonition and experience.[31] He spoke

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26. Cf. Eayrs, op. cit., p. 114ff.
27. Journal, 6:136.
28. Cf. Journal, 7:126n.
29. Cf. Letters, 3:115.
30. Cf. Ibid., 3:119.
31. Cf. Ibid., 3:35.

plainly to those who needed it; he encouraged other seasoned men to do the same. [32] He invited others to speak plainly to him. [33] He wanted to be shown his errors when he was wrong. He "dealt with every man as, if the tables were turned, I should desire he would deal with me." [34] He was a stern disciplinarian, but he had a forgiving spirit. [35] He insisted that all his conversation be with absolute openness and without reserve. [36] He encouraged men to speak their minds freely for he knew the poisoning effects of smoldering dissatisfaction. [37]

Wesley traveled constantly and generally he had one of his preachers with him. [38] What a privilege it must have been for these young preachers to watch the master preacher-teacher at work in the business of saving souls. [39] In this way they had the advantage of seeing the one who made the rules actually put them into practice. Then, too, Wesley's coolness in mob situations, his courage, his efforts to convert with kindness those who abused him, his reasoning ability and knowledge of the

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32. Cf. Ibid., 3:78.
33. Cf. Ibid., 3:103.
34. Ibid., 3:188.
35. Cf. Journal, 4:482.
36. Cf. Letters, 3:104.
37. Cf. Ibid., 3:41.
38. Cf. Tyerman, op. cit., 1:401.
39. Cf. Journal, 7:409n.

law before magistrates, and his innocence, were all goals at which they could aim. Thus he not only taught by what he said, and wrote, but by what he did as well.

On one occasion Matthew Mayer was the young preacher riding with Mr. Wesley when they arrived at Birmingham. Wesley put him in charge of the work for a week while taking the appointed preacher with him for the journey. It was reported that Mayer went to work with "fear and trembling," but he lived up to Mr. Wesley's expectations and had been successful in winning twenty people for God by the end of the week. Thus it was the beginning of a long and successful career as a minister. [40]

At other times Wesley made use of a practice which he had found highly useful - that of stationing his inexperienced men with or near those "who have more experience in the ways of God." [41]

He encouraged them to write to him in utmost confidence and freedom on whatever subject they desired, and there is ample evidence that they did just that, with utter lack of formality.[42] This correspondence afforded him the means of knowing his men and their needs and thus paved the way for many of the "advices" that he gave his preachers.

He advised them in the selection of preaching material. He encouraged them to preach the law as well as the gospel or

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40. Cf. Journal, 5:21n.

41. Letters, 3:243.

42. Cf. Ibid., 3:173.

promises of God.[43] He insisted that they preach on education, whether they could or not. Where sin prevailed he encouraged the use of subjects such as Sabbath-breaking, dram-drinking, evil speaking, unprofitable conversation, lightness, expansiveness, or gaity of apparel, contracting debts without due care to discharge them, smuggling, buying and selling of uncustomed goods, bribery,[44] formality in public worship,[45] holiness of heart and life, and some bits on the mode of worship, but not much.[46]

Wesley frowned on "the profuse throwing about (of) hell and damnation" but it was to be done when the occasion demanded. He himself had used it advantageously at times, for he felt it was better to scare sinners now than to let them awake in hell.[47] He urged his preachers to preach a positive gospel and not to be concerned with opinions of any kind, least of all concerning predestination.[48] They were to "present inward salvation by faith, by the divine evidence of sins forgiven."[49] He felt no change would ever come in people unless the preacher both preached and believed salvation by faith. To do otherwise was to preach in vain.[50]

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43. Cf. Works, 6:85ff.
44. Cf. Works, 8:308.
45. Cf. Ibid., 8:318.
46. Cf. Letters, 3:135.
47. Cf. Letters, 2:69.
48. Cf. Journal, 3:320.
49. Letters, 2:110.
50. Cf. Ibid., 2:137.

They were to proclaim the two great messages: "Christ dying for us" and "Christ reigning in us." [51] He encouraged the reading and explaining in public portions selected from the "Christian Library" and other good books. [52]

He deplored idleness of all forms in his preachers. They were to work at the job of being preachers - in study and saving souls - as they did at their trades or they would return to their trades. [53] He felt that no preacher should preach more than twice a day, except on Sunday or special occasions, and not to speak longer than one hour (including the prayer) nor to speak louder than necessary. To do so, he felt, was a "degree of self murder." [54] Begging, railing, and printing nonsense were not to be tolerated. [55] They were to love "strictest preaching best" for it best revealed the sins of the inner man [56] and to strive to awaken sinners rather than please their hearers. [57] They were to be mild, patient and peaceful in public and private, [58]

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51. Letters, 6:134.
52. Cf. Journal, 4:94, 189.
53. Cf. Letters, 3:71.
54. Ibid., 3:97.
55. Cf. Ibid., 3:30.
56. Cf. Works, 10:369.
57. Cf. Journal, 6:42.
58. Cf. Letters 3:115.

but compromise with evil was not to be tolerated at any time.[59] They were to walk as "becometh the gospel"[60] and be ever alert lest they fall.

From the prolific pen of Wesley there flowed a never ending stream of content material which could be used by his preachers as resource material that would fit almost any situation. These have been treated in another section, but they bear noting here: The Christian Library, Sermons, Notes on the New Testament, hymn-books, tracts, Lessons for Children, the Primitive Physic, histories, a dictionary, grammars, his Journal, his Letters, and the Minutes of the Conferences. There were "rules" which he drew up as operational procedures for his unlearned workers: The Rules of the Societies, The Twelve Rules of a Helper, The duties of the Assistants, Rules for Preachers and Advices to Assistants, and there were numerous bits of practical theology written on almost every activity of the preacher's work. These included advice on how to preach, pray, how to sing and to lead singing; how to assist one in seeking salvation, how to visit as a pastor and as a visitor, directions concerning pronunciation and gesture, bodily habits, sleep, care of one's horse, alcohol, tea, and even Hebrew vowel points.

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59. Cf. Ibid, 3:99.

60. Ibid, 3:94.

Wesley described his first preachers as men "who were young, poor, ignorant men, without experience, learning, or art," but it is evident that under his leadership and guidance they did not remain that way. Henry Bett, in an article entitled The Alleged Illiteracy of the Early Methodist Preacher, calls our attention to the fact that of the two hundred of Wesley's early preachers twenty six later became ministers in the Church of England. One became the classical master at Kingswood, a writer of Latin grammar, a graduate in both medicine and arts and later the vicar of Harwich. One took his master's degree at Oxford, wrote a life of Wesley and translated Poetics of Vida. Some of them became ministers of Dissenting Churches; one became a surgeon, and of those who remained in the connection, many were outstanding.

Thomas Walsh was a master of biblical learning. Francis Asbury was proficient in Latin, Greek, and Hebrew. Christopher Hopper and William Roberts, both had an effective knowledge of Latin, Greek and Hebrew. Alexander Coates knew five languages. Thomas Taylor was at home in Hebrew Old Testament, the Septuagint, the Greek Testament and the Vulgate. Adam Clarke was one of the outstanding biblical scholars of the age. Duncan McAllum knew Latin, Greek, Hebrew, and Syriac. He could preach in English and Gaelic. Joseph Sutcliff had a master's degree from Aberdeen and was a Latin, Greek and Hebrew scholar. He translated Saurin's Sermons from the French and published a commentary. Henry Moore was a classical scholar and assisted Wesley

with French correspondence. Joseph Cownley was one of the best read men of the generation and a great preacher. John Downes was an artist and a possessor of mathematical gifts. John Mason was an excellent botanist. James McQuigg was an Irish scholar of note and edited an Irish Bible. Thomas Olivers, Edward Perronet and Benjamin Rhodes were writers of hymns and hymn tunes. Samuel Bradburn was a first rate orator and John Nelson and Silas Told were writers of prose.[61]

Wesley's program of preacher training had come into being for the one purpose of training rough, crude men as instruments for the use of propagating the gospel throughout the land. The fact that many of them were to become capable, efficient and learned men reveals the effectiveness of the educational methods used by him in their training. The fact that many of them were worthy and capable of entering the regular ministries of the established churches of the day and to take their places as leaders and masters in scholastic fields leads one to the conviction that a leavening process was at work in which the spirit and vitality of the Methodist movement were to be carried to other areas of religious and intellectual life of eighteenth century England in a never ending program of religious education.

2. The Training and Use of Group Leaders

Wesley's endeavors to train laymen to assist him in the ever enlarging work of caring for the spirual welfare of the

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61. Cf. Proceedings of the Wesley Historical Society, 15:86ff.

the masses was not limited to preachers. His program also included the means of assisting leaders within the groups. Here was a program planned to use people of lesser talents than those of the preachers, but talents which he was determined to use to the utmost. And whether he realized it or not, these were the leaders destined to take the message of salvation down to the very grass roots of the people of the eighteenth century.

Supervision and encouragement of the members of the groups, the business of dealing with the money collected within the groups and the care of the sick and the destitute gave rise to the various group leaders, stewards and visitors of the sick. And while the program used to train them was not as elaborate as that used to train his preachers, he did set in motion sets of rules or "operational procedures," as they would be called today, whereby certain worthy members could be guided in the carrying out of the work assigned to them according to their various abilities. These rules plus their own religious experience and common sense were to make it possible for them to have an ever enlarging part in the propagation of the faith throughout the country.

a. The Steward

The office of the Steward came into being when, like the early disciples, Wesley felt that the collection and distribution of funds was demanding more of his time than he could spare. He first chose one, then four, and then seven "prudent" men and put into their care the administering of the collected funds.

They met weekly, consulted on the business at hand, administered assistance to those needing it, and so well did they function that he had only to revise their accounts and advise with them in certain financial matters. [62]

But methodical that he was, and unwilling to leave anything to chance, he set down those things which he considered the business of the Stewards: (1) to manage the temporal things of the Society, (2) to receive the subscriptions and contributions, (3) to expend what is needful from time to time, (4) to send relief to the poor, (5) to keep an exact account of all receipts and expenses, (6) to inform the minister if any of the rules of the Society are not punctually observed, (7) to tell the preachers in love if they think anything amiss either in their doctrine or life. And in carrying out their work, he prescribed certain rules for them to follow: (1) Be frugal - save everything that can be saved honestly. (2) Spend no more than you receive. Contract no debts. (3) Have no long accounts. Pay everything within the week. (4) Give none that ask relief either an ill word or an ill look. Do not hurt them, if you cannot help. (5) Expect no thanks from man. [63]

It is evident here that the work of a Steward was an administrative one, but with the function of watching for infractions of the rules in the Societies and the oversight of the doctrines and

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62. Cf. Letters, 2:305.

63. Cf. Ibid.

and lives of the preachers it did have spiritual implications. To be a good Steward, therefore, one would have to know the rules of the Society, the doctrines, and the character expected of a preacher. To be worthy of watching over the spiritual well being as well as the material goods of others he would have to be an example of what he expected of others.

b. Visitor of the Sick

While visiting the sick was a duty to be performed by all Christians and was to be neglected by none, nevertheless, when it was discovered that the Stewards were not always informed of illness of the people in time to render the greatest assistance, Wesley made an appeal for volunteers to serve as Visitors, and he assigned them to specified areas of the membership of the Societies.

Wesley was aware that there was a two-fold good to be accomplished by the work of the Visitor. First, there was the good done for the one in need, but there was also a good to be received by the Visitor himself. Wesley saw visiting the sick as a means of spiritual discipline, "of destroying natural levity, curing fondness for trifles, correcting wrong tempers, weakening of evil habits and enabling all to be better prepared to 'adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in every future scene of life." [64] It was a means whereby one could grow in lowliness, patience, tenderness of spirit, and sympathy for the afflicted, all of which

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64. Works, 7:126.

were most desirable traits for every Christian.[65] Thus the work of the Visitor may be summed up in these words:

> To comfort those who were in pain of body or mind, strengthen the feeble minded, quicken those that are faint and weary and to build up those who have believed in encouraging them to go on to perfection.[66]

And thus it is evident that under Wesley's leadership the Visitor was an evangelist for caring for the needs of the sick. This afforded one the opportunity of supplying their spiritual needs as well as instructing them in "the first principle of religion, to show them the dangers of walking in the way they now walked and pointing them to the 'Lamb of God' who could save them."[67]

To prepare oneself to do this properly, Wesley encouraged the Visitor to begin with himself. He should be aware of his own inability, lack of grace and understanding to do the task, and he should pray to God for strength, courage, and insight to perform his task in the spirit of humility, meekness, gentleness, patience, and long-suffering.

While Wesley insisted that there was no set rule to be followed in assisting one's patient spiritually, he nevertheless made some general suggestions which he knew from experience would work.

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65. Cf. Ibid., 7:120.

66. Ibid., 7:121ff.

67. Ibid., 7:120.

After caring for the physical needs of the patient such as food, raiment, fuel, and care, the Visitor was to make inquiries concerning the state of his soul in a very indirect method of approach. He suggested that this could be done by remarks relating to God's rule of the world and His awareness of the patient's condition. The patient was then to be examined as to his knowledge of the "principles of religion" and the state of the soul. While letting it be known that without holiness no man could see God, he was to urge him to repent. Before concluding the first visit, the patient was to be given certain tracts such as "Instructions for Christians," "Awake, thou that Sleepest," and "Nature and Design of Christianity" to be read. On the next visit the Visitor was to ascertain what he had read, how he understood what he had read and to press home for conviction the points essential for salvation. The visit, as all others, was to be concluded with prayer, even if written prayers had to be used. If the Visitor asked God, He would show him how to pray.[68] Thus the Visitor and the patient both would receive a blessing.

And as he had done before for other helpers, Wesley set forth so all could read and understand just what was the business of the Visitor.

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68. Cf. Ibid., 7:121ff.

> To see every sick person within the district thrice a week. To enquire into the state of their souls, and advise them as the occasion may require. To inquire into their disorders, and procure advice for them. To relieve them, if they are in want. To do everything for them which he (or she) can do. To bring his accounts weekly to the Stewards. [69]

Wesley encouraged the Visitors to be "plain and open in dealing with souls," to be "mild, tender, patient," to be clean and not overly nice. [70]

He was aware that his plan was based on that of the primitive church and that it worked for him as it had in the first century.

> Many lives have been saved, many sicknesses healed, much pain and want prevented or removed. Many hearts have been made glad, many mourners comforted; and the Visitors have found from Him whom they serve a present reward for all their labour. [71]

c. Band Leaders

John Wesley did not have too much to say about the leaders of his Bands, but from the Rules for the Bands which he published on December 25, 1738, it can be seen that it was a work of no small responsibility. In these rules, the leader had two sets of questions which were to help him in carrying on his work. First, there was that list which could be asked of any member at any time as he felt the occasion demanded:

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69. Letters, 2:306.

70. Cf. Ibid.

71. Ibid.

(1) Have you forgiveness of your sins? (2) Have you peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ? (3) Have you the witness of God's spirit with your spirit, that you are a child of God? (4) Is the love of God shed abroad in your heart; (5) Has no sin, inward or outward, dominion over you? (6) Do you desire to be told of your faults? (7) Do you desire to be told of your faults, and that plain and home? (8) Do you desire that every one of us should tell you, from time to time, whatever is in his heart concerning you? (9) Consider! Do you desire we should tell you whatsoever we think, whatsoever we fear, whatsoever we hear, concerning you? (10) Do you desire that in doing this we should come as close as possible, that we should cut to the quick, and search your heart to the bottom? (11) Is it your desire and design to be on this and all other occasions entirely open, so as to speak everything that is in your heart, without exception, without disguise, and without reserve? [72]

Secondly, there were those to be asked at every meeting:

(1) What known sins have you committed since our last meeting? (2) What temptations have you met with? (3) How (were) you delivered? (4) What have you thought, said, or done, of which you doubt whether it be sin or not? [73]

However strict and searching these may seem, the Directions for Bands which appeared in 1744 were even more so.

To those who are supposed to have "the faith that overcometh the world" it would not be "grievous":

> I. Carefully to abstain from doing evil; in particular (1) neither to buy nor sell anything at all on the Lord's Day. (2) To taste no spirituous liquor, no dram of any kind, unless prescribed by a Physician. (3) To be at a word both in buying and selling. (4) To pawn nothing. . .

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72. Works, 8:272.

73. Ibid.

(5) Not to mention the fault of any behind his back, and to stop those short that do. (6) To wear no needless ornaments, such as rings, earrings, necklaces, lace, ruffles. (7) To use no needless self-indulgence, such as taking snuff or tobacco, unless prescribed by a Physician.

II. Zealously to maintain good works; in particular, (1) To give alms of such as you possess, and that to the uttermost part of your power. (2) To reprove all that sin in your sight, and that in love and meekness of wisdom. (3) To be patterns of diligence and frugality, of self denial, and taking up the cross daily.

III. Constantly to attend on all the ordinances of God; in particular, - (1) To be at church, and at the Lord's table every week, and at every public meeting of the Bands. (2) To attend the ministry of the word every morning, unless distance, business, or sickness prevent. (3) To use private prayer every day, and family prayer, if you are the head of a family. (4) To read the Scriptures, and meditate thereon, at every vacant hour, and (5) To observe, as days of fasting or abstinence, all Fridays in the year. [74]

Since the Rules and the Instructions for the Bands were there to be read and obeyed by all who would remain a part of the Band, the work of the Band Leader was fairly simple since his function was to see that the business of being a Christian was being carried on according to the rules. However, his function seen in the light of the design of the Band Meeting, that of confessing faults to one another and attempting to help one another, takes on a new meaning. Even a casual reading of the Rules and Instructions reveals what a large order they included for anyone who tried to carry them out. They reveal that he had to be all that was expected of the others

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74. Ibid., 8:273ff.

plus being able to assist those under his authority in achieving the same goal. He must be not only an authority on spiritual matters, but on such related matters pertaining to dress, business, and social behavior. It is no wonder that in one of Wesley's letters he encouraged the leaders of Bands to have a "deep fear of God, a continual consciousness of His presence and a strong thirst after His whole image." [75] He must have realized they would need it. The Band Leaders were elected by lot, a method borrowed from the Moravians, [76] and were subject to removal for failure to watch over the souls of the people committed to their care. [77]

d. Class Leaders

The Class Leader came into being when Wesley found that he was no longer able to supervise the spiritual growth and development of his people as he desired to do. When he, their first spiritual parent, could no longer adequately care for their needs, he selected others who could love them, bear their infirmities, pray with and for them, instruct them and even to suffer for them if need be, as he would have done. These leaders became their spiritual parents who were charged with the responsibility of watching over their growth and development. Their relationship with the Class members was to be that of harmonious cooperation intent on helping "babes in Christ" become mature creatures in spiritual living. [78]

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75. Letters, 3:214.
76. Cf. Journal, 2:99.
77. Cf. Letters, 6:208.
78. Cf. Letters, 3:33.

In selecting the Class Leaders Wesley made every effort to secure the best person possible, and he set forth in a brief, simple way a list of those duties with which each was charged. He was to see every person in his Class at least once a week to inquire of their spiritual state. They were to advise and instruct each in turn as his needs necessitated and to receive what each was willing to contribute toward the relief of the poor. They were to meet the minister and the Stewards once a week to inform the minister of the sick, the disorderly who would not be reproved, and to pay to the Stewards what money they had collected.[79]

At first the Leader was to visit his members individually, but when this was found unsatisfactory, Wesley found that it was more expedient for them to meet the people in groups where in session of one or two hours' duration, they could receive instruction or reproof, make up quarrels, and settle disputes in the spirit of love. After they had concluded this work, they joined in a service of prayer and thanksgiving.

To make the meeting of the Classes meaningful, Wesley suggested that: (1) improper leaders be changed; (2) all leaders were to be of sound judgment and men devoted to God; (3) leaders should visit other Classes to observe their methods of procedure; and (4) the most useful leaders meet with other Classes as often as possible.[80]

In answer to the question how the leaders of the Classes

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79. Cf. Works, 13:226.

80. Cf. Works, 8:301.

could be more useful, he suggested: (1) that each leader was to be diligently examined in the methods used in meeting the Classes and to determine if adequate time was spent with each Class, (2) that the leader carefully examine the spiritual growth and development of each member of his Class, (3) that the leader make free and frequent use of conversation regarding his Class with the assistant.[81]

Wesley requested that the leaders give him a written account of those under their care. Thus the duty of the Class Leader was not one to be taken lightly, but seriously and intelligently. And while there were no schools for Class Leaders, these men actually learned by doing, - by experience and observation and by making use of the helps and assistance that Mr. Wesley and the assistants could give them.

From the educational point of view it is not at all difficult to see this program of leadership training as the means whereby the first rudiments of leadership were developed in the people. Here might well have been the training ground for larger assignments in the Methodist connection as well as the means of setting standards for hard work, frugality and service to God and man which could be used in the various branches of the expanding culture and economy of the day. Thus, while making their contribution to the Methodist groups they were also gaining an experience whereby they might well make an even larger contribution to the world in which they lived.

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81. Cf. Ibid., 8:301.

CHAPTER VIII

CONCLUSION

John Wesley as an Educator

Wherever the name of John Wesley is known today he is recognized as a preacher and a founder of one of the great religious movements of the times. This is due, no doubt, to the fact that preaching was the chief vehicle by which he carried the "light" that was his to the people with whom he worked. But John Wesley was more than a preacher, he was a teacher of the masses.

It is not at all difficult to think of John Wesley as a teacher. In fact, for a time he did think of teaching at the university as his life's work, and it is well known that he was eminently qualified to do the work of a teacher. He had come from a cultured environment; he had been trained in the best universities of the day; he was widely travelled for his time; he was well read; he had a wide interest in many areas of life which always serves a teacher well, and he was possessed of a love for people.

It is not hard to believe that he might have made teaching his career had it not been for the religious awakening which was his in that eventful year of 1738 when he felt his heart "strangely warmed." From that day on he was a preacher, but his record reveals that he was a very special kind of a preacher.

While his work was that of presenting a body of "saving truth," he was not content to present flaming sermons and then move on to other fields of endeavor as has been the case with other religious leaders. He felt constrained to stand by to encourage the growth and ultimate fruition of the ideas which he had presented and encouraged his people to accept.

In his preaching there was a deliberate attempt to make use of a so-called "technique of instruction" by which he used to appeal to the known and acceptable, to present a statement of need or desire, to picture the desired goal and to encourage action on the part of his hearers immediately. His was preaching with a purpose of reforming sinners, informing the minds of his people and encouraging action now. He was aware that preaching at its best was good teaching.

Thus, while John Wesley might have qualified as a teacher in one of the great universities of the day, it is not from this point of view that we have seen him in this study, but rather from the point of view of his taking the "light" that was his into the byways of England to share what he had with the unloved, unsung and untouched masses of the day. Thus this has not been the study of one who followed the usual pursuits of an educator in the class rooms where so-called "formal education" was to be found, but the study of a man who was concerned with the "education" of the masses in a far more informal way.

In accepting the challenge that was his to go to the masses of the people, John Wesley did face and cope with many of the

problems with which educators of all ages have met and coped. His recognition of and efforts to cope with these problems furnish the background against which this study has looked at John Wesley as an educator.

His Recognition of the Needs of His People

Following his religious awakening in 1738, John Wesley came to have a burning desire to share what he had received with those around him. Immediately he set about to tell others of the answer he had found to his own needs. As he did, he became aware that there were countless others who had the need of the thing that he had just discovered. The more he tried to share with others, the more he became aware of the needs of the people around him. Having been steeped in the Bible, he found in it not only the account of what he thought was the great need of man, but what was to be done about it. The Bible became the "Book of Books" to him, not only for his thinking, but for much that he was to do.

Wesley looked on man as utterly depraved and utterly helpless to do anything about his condition either spiritually or physically. Salvation was the work of God. It was an act of grace on the part of a loving God, but it was dependent on an act of faith on the part of man, for God would not violate the will of man by forcing him to accept salvation. Salvation for all men came, however, when man saw himself as a poor, lost creature and claimed the work of grace which was available.

When this was accomplished, man was pardoned, that is, justified, for all past sins. This was only the beginning, however, for man must now become a co-worker with God in working out his own salvation.

John Wesley saw his work in terms of helping people work out their salvation, and in his efforts to help them there is seen an awareness of their needs in a much wider way than is revealed in his more formal statements. He was aware that they needed to know and recognize their own state of being; they needed to know the Bible and what it taught. They needed to know how to put the principles of the Bible into daily living. They needed to know how to continue their "growth in Grace" and to be able to assist others to do the same.

This was brought home to him in a concrete way when the group came to him with a request that he meet with them to further them in their quest for "more light." This was the beginning place of a long career dedicated to the task of trying to assist earnest seekers to find the way to a larger way of life which he had revealed to them by precept and example as the "good life."

Wesley's Genius

A study of this kind reveals that the genius of Wesley lies in the fact that he was able to take ideas and tools which were not necessarily new and make effective use of them as few men

have ever done. This is certainly evident in his long and sacrificial endeavors to meet the needs of his people, which reveal him as an educator in no uncertain way.

1. A Body of Content-Material is Provided

In the beginning of the movement, preaching was the one means of taking his message to the people, but early in the ministry he became aware of the need to provide his people with a body of content-material by which they could retain what they had heard at the preaching services. He started printing sermons which could be read and studied over and over, to make clear the messages they contained. At first these were published separately, but later they were also published along with certain favorite hymns. And little by little, the printing presses were to be set in high gear to make available his "Notes," "Journal," "Letters," hymns, tracts, magazines, dictionaries, grammars and the Christian Library.

The use he made of the printed word was one of his most effective methods, not only of propagating but of sustaining the faith. It served as a means of putting a foundation under his evangelistic endeavors, which was without equal in the field of evangelistic leaders. In the printed word he found the means of instructing the people in the Christian way of life and of providing them with the means of instructing others.

2. Wesley's Organization

As the Methodist Movement grew, another need soon became evident, and that was to provide for some kind of organization

by which some kind of control might be maintained. He was aware that unless he was able to bring these "babes in Christ" into some kind of organization where their continued growth and development could be directed, the movement would soon die out.

There was no preconceived plan of what the movement was to become, but, like all else in his work, Wesley's organization unfolded as he attempted to meet the needs of his people. So much of what appears today as well-integrated parts of a well-worked-out plan were actually steps of expediency, which he used often on the spur of the moment to make possible the meeting of some need.

Just as he came to use field-preaching when he found the people in the open spaces waiting to be instructed, just so did he come to make use of the Bands, Classes, Societies and Conferences when the need arose for the closer supervision and instruction of his converts. There was never any preconceived plan of preaching, converting and then organizing the people into groups, but these followed in natural sequence as he attempted to meet their several needs.

Here, in the organization of the Methodist movement, is actually the secret of its success. It was in these groups, ranging in size from five or six, as was the case in the Bands, to those of over one hundred, as was the case with the Conferences of his preachers, that Wesley was providing an opportunity for like-minded people to come together to share, not only their sins and short-comings, but also their needs and their desires

and to encourage one another in finding the answers to their common needs. Here were "schools of life" where men and women gathered together to find answers to their own needs and to help others do so at the same time.

3. The Selection and Training of Leaders

A study of this kind reveals that one of the problems that plagued Wesley from the very beginning was that of finding qualified persons to assist him in the ever-expanding work that was his. Since there were no leaders to be had, he set about to train his own. The educational process that he made use of in this connection is clearly seen in the program set up to train his preachers.

Each was selected with care and then made part of an in-service training program whereby each one could make use of the ability that was his as he learned to be a more effective leader. Wesley insisted on daily study and the reading of good books. He himself read to them and directed them in their growth and development. He had them write sermons for him which he could criticize and evaluate. He stationed the ones with the least training near those who were better trained so they could actually learn by doing the work which he felt they were capable of doing.

Wesley also made use of this same type of "learn by doing" training to supply leaders for the other organizations of the movement. The leaders of the Bands, Classes and

Societies, as well as the Visitors of the sick and Stewards, were all carefully selected; but then, in turn, they were given the tasks of helping others while they themselves were actually learning under the direction of Wesley.

The effectiveness of Wesley's program of in-service training can be seen in the fact that it not only provided the movement with a continuing supply of capable leaders during the lifetime of the founder, but made possible its continuation even after his death.

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In the emphasis that has been placed on his ability as a preacher and organizer of a movement, the contribution John Wesley made in his recognition of and his efforts to meet the needs of his people has been long overlooked. Therefore, the purpose of this study has been to bring together from the vast literature on John Wesley elements of an account of his educational effort. This study has been an endeavor to reveal a John Wesley who recognized the needs and values of the individual; who made use of preaching as an educational method to present a body of content-material; who rediscovered the Bible and made it live for the people; who created a desire for more "light" and created an organization by which it might be carried to the people; and who revealed the use that could be made of the printed word as an educational method.

In touching the lives of so many people in a real, live, dynamic way, he set in motion those forces for good which were to play a tremendous part in the shaping of the destiny of England and of the world for many years to come. Here was a man whose aim was to teach men to be religious, as he understood it, but in doing that he taught them to read, to love good books, to be frugal and honest, to help one another, to desire the better things in life for themselves and others and to work together for the salvation of the souls of all.

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